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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE USE OF FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF CAMARA LAYE AND NGUGI WA THIONG'O

BY

JANE AWINJA NANDWA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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DEGREE OF: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

my father, Rev. Joash Anaminyi

and to

my late mother, Rachel Nemali Anaminyi

who encouraged me to pursue education to its highest limits.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the use of folklore in the works of Camara Laye and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to determine what folkloric elements are utilized, how they are utilized, and why. For analysis the study employs Ricoeur's theory of interpretation which looks at language as discourse. For that reason, purpose, rather than process, is highlighted because both Ngũgĩ and Laye are far more concerned with imaginative prediction of society than with speculative evaluation of the nature of literature. The Afrocentric point of view from which the study is interpreted further underscores the functional aspect of folklore in their literary works.

The study reveals that Ngũgĩ and Laye utilize folklore in their works to portray African culture positively in order to correct some of the misconceptions about African civilization that were perpetrated by colonialism and are still being maintained by neo-colonialism. The first chapter re-evaluates some of the controversial issues surrounding the study of African literature such as Negritude, language and audience, and relates them to the use of folklore in Laye's and Ngũgĩ's works. Negritude as a philosophical concept is still pertinent to the study of folklore in Laye's and Ngũgĩ's works. Ngũgĩ's writing in Gĩkũyũ also fulfils Negritude's exigency to return to Africa's cultural roots and also culminates the debate that began in 1962 in Makerere, Uganda, concerning the language African writers should utilize for their creative works. At the same time, the Gĩkũyũ works finally reach the African audience for whom they are intended, especially in their dramatic form.

The rest of the chapters illustrate how Laye and Ngũgĩ employ folkloric elements in their literary works in order to fulfil these didactic and artistic purposes. The study concludes that, regardless of the immense illiteracy of the African people, it is vital to record the African heritage, so that Africa's future children may find something relevant to read, which might help them to rehabilitate the continent of Africa and bring about its total liberation, politically, socially and economically.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The use of folklore in African literature is a fact that most scholars generally agree upon, for they recognize that "Africa, while assimilating Europe, never completely relinquished her own traditions, philosophy, nor principles of creative art" (Lindfors 28). We must, however, bear in mind that this assimilation was forced upon Africa, and it is only then that we shall understand why African writers protested against it. The portraiture of this protestation in African literature took many forms, one of which was the incorporation of folkloric elements in the literature. As it has often been pointed out, written African literature, over the last fifty years, has emerged, to a large extent, as a creative reaction to European imperialism and its manifestations of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Colonialism systematically distorted, disparaged, diminished, and reversed the history of Africa, and replaced a small part of the African heritage with a foreign system and technology together with its modes of production and consumption.

To fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism, African writers incorporate folkloric elements in their creative writing. In so doing, they re-affirm and re-establish the equilibrium of African cultural values. As Soyinka aptly states: "The quest for and the consequent assertion of the black cultural psyche began as a result of the deliberate propagation of untruths by others, both for racist motives and to disguise their incapacity to penetrate the complex verities of black existence" (107). Folklore is, therefore, utilized as a tool for correcting some of these "untruths" that were propagated by others.

Furthermore, the incorporation of folklore in African literature is also a way in which the alienated "intellectuals, the elite and the middle classes", who finding "themselves not quite accepted in the world of their conquerors" and "rejected by their counterparts in the white structure, their humanity sometimes denied in the name of race", return to their roots to find their lost identity (Ngũgĩ 10). This is the type of alienation Camara Laye felt when he wrote L'Enfant noir as he himself explains:

> Vivant à Paris, loin de ma Guinée natale, loin de mes parents, et y vivant depuis des années dans un isolement rarement interrompu, je me suis transporté mille fois par la pensée dans mon pays, près des miens ... Et puis, un jour, j'ai pensé que ces souvenirs, qui à l'époque étaient dans toute leur fraîcheur, pourraient, avec le temps, sinon s'effacer ... Et j'ai commencé de les écrire. Je vivais seul, seul dans ma chambre d'étudiant pauvre, et j'écrivais: ... j'écrivais pour mon plaisir; et c'était un extraordinaire plaisir, un plaisir dont le coeur ne se lassait pas (qtd. in Hutchinson 7).

Laye invoked his "ancestors to bring solace to his bleeding and alienated self" (Wanjala 346), to demonstrate the beauty of African culture, and to testify to its greatness with the objective of making the "people who had not been aware that Africa had its own culture, to grasp our past and our civilization" (Laye 20-22). Or, in Achebe's words, to let them know that:

> African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all they had dignity (157).

Failure to take into consideration the use of folklore in African literature often leads to the kind of reaction that L'Enfant noir received at its first publication. European critics, for instance, instead of grasping "the significance of our past and our civilization" as Laye intended, simply saw it as a nostalgic autobiographical novel that portrayed the Guinea of Laye's childhood, that probably never existed. The African critics, like Mongo Beti, on the other hand, felt that Laye was not anti-colonial enough, for he had ignored the African colonial reality by writing L'Enfant noir as if he had not "witnessed a single extortion by the colonial administration" (qtd. in King 98). Achebe, for example, found L'Enfant noir "a little too sweet " (7). But Soyinka, unlike Achebe and Mongo Beti, commends Laye for making "a deft exposition of the African world view" (122).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, on the other hand, castigates colonialism and neo-colonialism directly in most of his works, through suitably selected folkloric elements. In his early works, for instance, the struggle for land is a central issue and Ngũgĩ utilizes the Agikuyu myth of origin to justify this struggle; no other folkloric element could convey the same message however well handled it might be. The struggle for land was "fired, fuelled and sustained because the Agikuyu possessed and cherished a body of myths which said that their land was God-given, sacred, and theirs for eternity no matter how powerful the forces that might from time to time try to steal it" (Roscoe 22). In Ngũgĩ's works political protest is enhanced by folklore.

Camara Laye and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, like most African writers, utilize folklore as a means of working "towards a definition, in and through literature, of a distinctive mode of thought and feeling, towards an imaginative apprehension and embodiment of an African spirit", with a hope of working out "a new spiritual coherence out of the historical disconnection between their African heritage and their modern experience" (Irele 10).

Although "things have changed a lot" since Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Camara Laye began writing, "it would be foolish to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe", not to mention the present one, in the form of neo-colonialism (Achebe 71).

This study will investigate the use of folklore in the works of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Camara Laye that have been published to date, with the purpose of revealing their artistic and aesthetic significance in the literary texts and, subsequently, demonstrating their functional significance in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism. For analysis we shall utilize the theory of interpretation as outlined by Ricoeur in his work Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning which will be encompassed by an Afrocentric conceptual framework. The imperatives of the Afrocentric conceptual framework will be derived from the African concept of art and discourse as delineated by Soyinka in Myth, Literature and the African World, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature, and Finnegan in Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication. Finnegan is included here because her analysis of African cultural elements is deemed to be from an Afrocentric perspective.

In his Interpretation Theory, Ricoeur looks at language as discourse, and according to him "discourse requires two basic signs - a noun and a verb - which are connected in a synthesis which goes beyond the words ... their conjunction brings forth a predicative link which can be called logos, discourse" (1-2). Ricoeur's interpretation theory deals with more than mere structure, for in the structural model, the "synchronic approach" precedes "the diachronic", and "paradigmatic position of systems constituted of finite sets of discrete entities, lies in the combinatory capacity and the quasi-algebraic possibilities pertaining to such sets" (Ricoeur 5). "In such a system", as Ricoeur explains, "no entity belonging to the structure of the system has a meaning of its own" and "in such finite systems, all the relations are immanent to the system" (5). For that reason, "semiotic systems are 'closed', ... without relation to external, non-semiotic reality" (5-6).

On the other hand, language as discourse deals with semantics rather than semiotics, and while the object of semiotics, the sign, is ... virtual, "the object of semantics, the sentence, is actual as the very event of speaking" (Ricoeur 7). More importantly, "semantics, the science of the sentence, is immediately concerned with the concept of sense .... [or meaning]" (Ricoeur 8). The theory of discourse is more relevant to the study of the use of folklore in African literature than pure structuralism, because it is concerned with the concept of meaning, on which this study will focus, for a study of the significance of folklore in African literature is ultimately a study of meaning.

Interpretation in the context of African literature, therefore, requires the critic to go beyond mere explanation of how the text works, as in structural criticism, to an understanding of the meaning of its content and purpose. According to Ricoeur, "structuralism explains but does not interpret, it merely brings out the logic of ... operations" (84). For total interpretation to be achieved, "explanation (erklären) requires understanding (verstehen) and understanding, subsequently, brings forth in a new way the inner dialectic, which constitutes interpretation as a whole" (Ricoeur 86).

In the context of theory of interpretation, structural analysis is not regarded as an end in itself, but as an analytical process that leads us "from a surface semantics, that of the narrated myth, to a depth semantics, that of the boundary situations, which constitute the ultimate referent of the myth", the resolution of human conflicts in the real world of lived experience (Ricoeur 86). From an African point of view it constitutes our response to the "voice calling ... from the depths of the soul" that Laye discusses in the introduction to Le Maître de la parole.

Moreover, language makes private experience public and it transforms the psychic into the noetic. Through this process of exteriorization "a part of our life is elevated into the logos of discourse" (Ricoeur 19). If language is capable of exteriorizing experience, then we could postulate that Ngũgĩ and Laye use folklore to convey the African experience to the reader.

In addition, Ricoeur's theory of interpretation will be useful to this study because it narrows the gap between folklore and written literature, a gap that recent studies of oral and written literature have tended to widen (Ong 1982; Goody 1988). From Ricoeur's point of view, however, poems, narratives, and short stories are discourses that rely "on laws of composition which in principle are indifferent to the opposition between speaking and writing" (32), a view that Ruth Finnegan supports when she states that "Far from being something totally mysterious or blindly subject to some strange force of 'tradition', oral literature in fact bears the same kind of relation to its social background as does written literature" (54). This perspective is useful because it shifts the emphasis from the distinction oral/written, upon which earlier scholars had focused, to that of looking at folklore and literature as discourses which use similar processes of artistic creativity. The integration of folklore in African literature could, therefore, be seen as an instance of intertextuality. Intertextuality is, in fact, one of the characteristic features of folklore which Propp observes in his study, Morphology of the Folktale, when he states: "Tales possess one special characteristic: components of one tale can, without any alteration whatsoever, be transferred to another" (7).

The analysis of folklore in the works of Ngũgĩ and Laye in the context of the theory of discourse will be illuminating because its analysis goes beyond mere structuralism to an interpretation of the message. African literature is "a literature of a people and we cannot fully understand it by the simple separation of form and content for literature is part and parcel of a social situation and must be approached primarily as a mode of collective belief and action" (Nnolim 35). In the African context, according to Jahn, language has magical power of "transmission, creation, and procreation" (qtd. in Wauthier 172). It is "logos" in the Biblical sense of the word, even in its written form, and, subsequently, it is capable of moving people to action. Moreover, each time reading takes place, the written word is re-oralized, for the oral expression can do without writing, but the written word cannot dispense with orality (Ong 8).

Furthermore, content in African literature is given precedence over form. As Ngũgĩ points out "writing in our languages per se ... [important as it is] will not bring about the renaissance in African cultures if that literature does not carry the content of our people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control" (Decolonising, 29). A number of Western critics also point out the significance of the message in literary texts. Jameson, for instance, insists that in a literary text:

> we must first come to terms with the message itself, which may be described loosely as a type of Erlebnis or experience vécue, a lived experience of some sort, no matter how minimal or specialized. (120)

Lukacs also considers a literary work as a:

> representation of life, [which is] structured and ordered more richly

> than experience, [and being] in intimate relation to the active social function, [it is] the propaganda effect of the genuine work of art (40).

Furthermore, "if a book is alive, it is 'a man speaking to men' and appealing to our humanity and intelligence" (Stock 3), and as C.P. Snow adds, great "realistic novels have so much to teach anyone willing to learn" (8).

African literature is usually written from a "realistic" perspective, which sees the function of literature as that of penetrating the "laws governing reality and uncovering of the deeper, hidden, mediated, not immediately perceptible network of relationships that go to make up society" (Lukacs 38-39). Or more specifically, its social function is said to be that of "the visionary reconstruction of the past for the purpose of social direction" (Soyinka 106).

In order to conduct the whole study from a better perspective, we shall encompass it within an Afrocentric conceptual framework, which simply means applying the African concepts of art, language and discourse to the analytical process of this study. Having said that, we realize that certain African scholars, such as Hountondji, have contested the very idea of African concepts, and categorically stated that Africa is only a geographical and not a metaphysical reality; a notion that is diametrically opposed to that of Achebe, who states that Africa is not only a geographical reality but a metaphysical one. Scholars like Hountondji are no different from Hegel who dismissed Africa by stating that:

> Africa proper, as far as history goes back has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world shut up; it is ... the

> land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of the night ... The negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality - all that we call feeling - if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. At this point, we leave Africa never to mention it again. For it ... has no movement of development to exhibit ... (91-99).

While one might understand why foreign philosophers, like Hegel, could propagate such "untruths" about Africa and Africans, possibly out of "racist motives and to disguise their incapacity to penetrate the complex verities of black existence" (Soyinka 107), one finds it hard to comprehend why an African philosopher like Hountondji, writing in post independence Africa would reinforce the same negative view about Africa by desiring to "leave Africa never to mention it again" and to turn the attention of the African public to Europe. Hountondji reckons that what the African public wants most is "to be widely informed about what is going on elsewhere" (54), I suppose, at the expense of what is going on around them. To people like Hountondji the following statement from Fanon would be an appropriate response: "If we want to turn Africa into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us" (255).

Fortunately our creative writers know better, for they recognize that although the battle against colonialism, to a limited extent, has been won through the political independence of most African states, the war against colonialism and neo-colonialism is yet to be won. The ogre of colonialism has simply transformed himself into a Tutuolian type of complete gentleman, namely neo-colonialism. The opposition against Africa's right of self-definition as a continent is a very subtle form of neo-colonialism. I am inclined to ask like Soyinka does in his paper "The African World and the Ethnocultural Debate" why, for instance, "The Arabs are free to formalize structure [as well as the Western Societies] and defend a unified concept of their own culture in spite of self evident diversities, but a similar right is denied to black Africans." Why, Soyinka continues to ask, are:

> we on our part ... being declared a non-people, for this is the only meaning we can attach to the aggressive negation of all the efforts of black peoples to come to terms with the possible unifying essence of their cultural existence. What is it that is intellectually or politically frightening about the expression of or speculation over this identity? What agitates people's minds against ... a contiguous culture - black, Negro-African, African, South-of-the-Sahara's, or whatever terminology by which they identify themselves?" (Soyinka 28).

If the problem of terminology arises from the fact that the language we are using is not ours, then what should be understood each time the term 'African' is utilized is that this is the reference to the race known in "Africa as bakinutane as awa enia dudu" (Soyinka 28). Each of these expressions, as Soyinka explains, "predates the incursion into the land of enia dudu of the progenitors of any (self defined) European, Caucasian, Aryan, Semite, or Arab". More importantly, the "expression has always encompassed more than the specific users of that language; it has transcended their nation-state boundaries" which is further evidenced by "the folklore, mythology and contemporary literature of its peoples" (28-29).

If African peoples had terms that conceptualized a larger group of people beyond the confines of a single tribal unit there is nothing wrong in speaking of an Afrocentric conceptual framework that would encompass more than a single ethnic group. Otherwise one would be tempted to agree with Chris Wanjala who states that "When the West says Africa is becoming a vital area in international politics, what that means to us is that there is still a scramble in the West for Africa" (336). This scramble, as we all know, has always been governed by the philosophy of "divide and rule". We as African scholars and critics must continue to struggle against this divisive philosophy if we want to see a total liberation for the African continent. We must be "committed to the African reality and not to the foreign ideologies for their own sake" (Wanjala 336). We must stop wasting our time "in defensive operations ... [and] go forth in confidence to do research among our own people" (p'Bitek 89). This study is to a certain extent a "research among our own people" (p'Bitek 89). Kofi Owusu, on the other hand, would like to refine all the "influence" studies out of existence and as much as I would like to agree with Kofi's thesis, I still feel we should proceed cautiously lest we refine ourselves out of existence (12). We must continue to struggle for recognition in this so called "global village", lest we are relegated into "reserves" alongside our wildlife to be utilized as curios for touristic purposes. Our way of thinking and perception may be different, but we are no "wild untamed" people in the natural state, as Hegel would like us to believe.

For that reason, I will adopt the term "African" and "Afrocentric" and apply them to the concepts of art, language and discourse, drawing their illustrations from the works of Soyinka, Ngũgĩ and Finnegan, with the assumption that there are more similarities than dissimilarities between various expressive cultures of Africa, until further research proves the contrary.

In Myth, Literature and the African World, Soyinka defines Yoruba art as that which is 'essential' and not 'ideational'. "It is not the idea ... that is transmitted ... but a quintessence of inner being, a symbolic interaction of the many aspects of revelations ... with their moral apprehension" (141). When one is looking for meaning in African art, it is never a search for a "singular meaning" that the world carries "on its face" and which is yielded up to us in "the unblemished mirror of our language" that Terry Eagleton criticizes (108), but a complex "symbolic interaction" of multifaceted "revelations" with their moral message. When this art is in the musical form that accompanies ritual and drama, it becomes an integral part of myth and poetry. As Soyinka explains, "The nature of Yoruba music is intensively the nature of its language and poetry, highly charged, symbolic, myth-embryonic" (147). Furthermore, in the context of religious rites, language "reverts ... to its pristine existence, eschewing the sterile limits of particularisation ... words are taken back to their roots, to their original poetic sources when fusion was total and the movement of words was the very passage of music and dance of images" (Soyinka 147).

This is why, in L'Enfant noir, Senghor says of both the blacksmith's incantations and the praise-singers song:

> The prayer, or rather the poem which he recites, the song of praise which the griot sings as he works the gold, the dance of the smith at the end of the operation it is all that - poem, song and dance - which more than the gestures of the craftsman, accomplish the work, and make it a work of art ... All human creating is a kind of magic ... Camara Laye ... was able to give this abstract formula a spiritual meaning, the living meaning of symbol (qtd. in Beier 201).

If "all human creating is a kind of magic", creative writing could also be characterized as a kind of magic, and since it uses language as a tool for its creativity, language then assumes this magical power, at least from an Afrocentric point of view. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for instance, clearly states that from an African perspective "Language [is] not a mere string of words. It [has] a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning". This "magical power of language [is] reinforced by the games [children play] with words through riddles, [and] proverbs .... The language through images and symbols, [gives] us a view of the world" (Decolonising 11). Nor does writing hinder this magical power of language to communicate a meaning beyond the lexical one, for as Okot p'Bitek points out "writing like painting and sculpting is merely a tool that is used for 'communicating' ideas" (37).

As already stated, the meaning that the African discourse yields is not singular but complex, and Ruth Finnegan delineates an aspect of its complexity in her latest work, Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication. Ruth Finnegan's ideas are appropriate to the Afrocentric perspective, for she is one of the Western scholars that has consistently and strongly supported an Afrocentric world view and who sees it both as valid and equivalent to the Western one. Nor does the fact that it is expressed orally by the majority of African peoples diminish its profundity and validity.

In opposition to scholars like Walter Ong who believe that "abstractly sequential, classificatory explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading" (8-9), Ruth Finnegan points out that through oral literature, which to her is equivalent to written literature, oral cultures are capable of abstract intellectual expression, insight, and understanding, for:

> if we think of literature as a condition for the flowering of intellectual and perceptive thought it is hard to see any great divide between those societies which happen to use writing for literary expression and those which do not. In the use of literature as communication of insight, there is nothing 'other' about non-literate societies - just as there is nothing magic about writing (Literacy and Orality, 67).

For those who would like to think that oral societies lack a means of formulating concepts, Ruth Finnegan adds:

> Individuals in non-literate societies grow up in an atmosphere in which literary forms are there to mould their thoughts, heighten their awareness and provide a form through which they can convey their own insight and philosophy (Literacy and Orality, 67-68).

As a strong proponent of the African world view Ruth Finnegan provides the "Limba philosophy of speech and language" as further proof that oral cultures are capable of formulating ideas and systems of thought. According to her, the Limba portray "an awareness of the subtleties and depths of linguistic expression" (46). The Limba concept of "speaking" or discourse is both complex and polysemantic. It refers to conversation, arbitration by those in authority, mediation in the sense of spokesperson and also to verbal art, among other things (46). It is the concept of speaking as verbal art that interests us most in the context of our discussion since folklore is by definition verbal art. The griot, for instance, refers to himself as master of eloquence or the master of the word, which consequently refers to all these functions of "speaking". That being the case, the griot not only holds a dialogue with his audience, but also arbitrates between those in authority and the ordinary people, informs the society about their history and cultural values and generally acts as a spokesperson for the whole society.

The African writer is often referred to as a modern griot, who is supposed to perform all the functions that were executed by the traditional griot. African writers themselves usually describe their literature in functional terms, and also see it as a continuation of the indigenous African tradition. They "respond to something in themselves and also [to] ... the traditional concept of an artist's role in society" (Achebe 7). Ngũgĩ's novel Devil on the Cross, in fact, opens with a proclamation by a "prophet of justice" and, in so doing, demands to be treated like a prophetic utterance along with all its implications. In this novel the writer, in the guise of an oral artist, utilizes the folkloric elements to pass judgement, cajole, ridicule, warn, advise, indict and generally speak for social justice. The concept of the African writer as a modern griot is finally and fully illustrated by this novel.

On the other hand, Camara Laye, in his introduction to Le Maître de la parole, emphasizes the importance of collecting and preserving African folklore "car celles-ci constituent les fondement mêmes de notre histoire, et ... de nos civilisations traditionelles particulières" (13). He also highlights the significance of diffusing the true version of our oral traditions by writing them down in both the European and African languages. In addition, he reasserts the objectives of the Negritude movement to rediscover and rehabilitate traditional African values and to reject the notions of European cultural superiority.

In this dissertation, folklore will be defined in its broadest terms to include the oral traditions of a people as they appear in their customs, belief, magic, and ritual, in addition to myths, legends, tales, popular stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, and anecdotes found among a homogenous group of a people (Nnolim 35). We shall also take into consideration the updated definition of folklore, as outlined by

Dan Ben Amos in his paper "Towards a Definition of Folklore in Context" in which he defines folklore as an artistic action which involves creativity and aesthetic response, portrayed in the art form itself. It is distinguished from non-folkloric communication by the text, texture, and context of the oral and/or sung forms, which are further governed by the conventions which specify the time, place, and company in which the folkloric actions take place and, thus, provide the spatio-temporal and social definition for folklore in culture (10-11). These specifications of the folkloric elements will be used as critical tools for the identification of the folkloric elements in the writings of Ngũgĩ and Laye.

In utilizing Ben Amos's updated definition of folklore, this study gains by being able to apply the term "folklore" without most of the negative connotations that it possessed at the beginning of its coinage. Ben Amos systematically and chronologically traces its various definitions and usages up to its present moment where it has attained respectability as an object of study and a discipline worthy of scholarly attention.

As a scholarly discipline, folklore also "considers the crossing of genres and the crossing of media" (Dorson 18). The use of folklore in written literature is, ultimately, a study of crossing of media boundaries and, in the case of Africa, crossing of cultures. Folklore in African literature is a crossing of cultures not only because of the written medium in which it is transposed, but because of the foreign languages in which it is written. Factors such as the medium of transmission, foreign languages, and audience will be examined in relation to the question of refunctionalisation of folklore. What impact, for instance, does African folklore written in foreign languages have on both the African and the foreign audience? The question of foreign languages presents a dilemma to African writers for they realize that they cannot "rehabilitate their smashed-up cultures", if they continue to write in the languages of their colonizers (Nkosi 2). In order to change this assimilationist position of African literature and establish an authentic African creative writing through which African cultures can be rehabilitated, Ngũgī wa Thiong'o has finally decided to write in his own language and to incorporate a large number of folkloric elements in his literary texts. Writing in Gīkũyũ has in addition opened up Ngũgī's literary works to the ordinary people. According to Ngũgī, once the language and content is right, the written medium poses no problems to the ordinary people, to whom the literature is addressed. To support his argument Ngũgī cites the reception of Devil on the Cross, which was originally written in Gīkũyũ, as a case in point. Devil on the Cross was "read in families. A family would get together every evening and one of their literate members would read it for them. Workers would also gather in groups, particularly during the lunch break, and they would get one of them to read the book" (Decolonising 83). The novel was not only read in families, but on buses, in taxis, and in public bars. By being transmitted orally the novel was almost turned into a folkloric text which is usually performed to a live audience in small groups, and in so doing the supposed problem of the written medium was circumvented.

Laye, on his part, uses repetition to create a French language suitable to the African subject he is writing about and also to make his works comprehensible to his African audience. Repetition also gives Laye's work a specific African quality by changing "the tone of the language to convey the psychology of an African narrator sensitive to his own language in which repetition is used for emphasis" (King 114). When dealing with folklore, we should remember that we are dealing with variants and that "the variant text slips outside the bounds of one or another genre.... Riddles and proverbs, in Africa particularly, may merge.... Many genres combine music, dance, drama, narrative, song and ritual. The oral and the written words mutually influence each other" (Dorson 18), as shall be demonstrated also by this study.

Folklore is also a symbolic process both in its natural habitat and in the context of written African literature. Like any other art, "folklore is a symbolic kind of action. Its forms have symbolic significance far beyond the explicit content of the particular text, melody or artifact" (Ben Amos 11). In addition, the concept of symbol "brings together two dimensions ... two universes of discourse, one linguistic and the other of non-linguistic order" (Ricoeur 53-54). Symbol is, therefore, said to have a double meaning because its linguistic element always refers to something else (Ricoeur 54); a notion that will be useful to keep in mind when we are interpreting snake symbolism in both L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. However, the concept of symbol is a problematic one because it "belongs to too many and too diverse fields of research" (Ricoeur 53). Psychoanalysis, for instance, links its symbols to hidden psychic conflicts; literary criticism often to a vision of the world or to a desire to transform all language into literature; and the religious historian sees in symbols the milieu of manifestation of the Sacred, what Eliade calls hierophanies (Ricoeur 54).

The folkloric symbol traverses all these different fields of research, and its interpretation depends on the context in which it is being used. The interpretation of the symbolic significance of folklore in the works of Ngũgĩ and Laye could be approached from any of these perspectives: the psychological, the religious, and the literary. For instance, the snake in L'Enfant noir could be interpreted as a psychological symbol since Laye's father encountered it in his dreams. We could even be tempted to apply the Freudian theories of the language of dreams and the unconscious, but in the context in which the snake is being utilized, a psychological interpretation would be misleading since psychoanalysis tends to interpret snakes as phallic symbols. In this context the snake is a religious symbol, for it is the guiding spirit of Laye's father, and its interpretation can only be illuminated by the cosmogony of the Malinké as Jacques Bourgeacq illustrates in his study of L'Enfant noir. Similarly, the snakes in Le Regard du roi could be interpreted as religious symbols, for Dioki utilizes them to foresee the future in order to inform Clarence of the time the King would arrive. Most critics have unwittingly interpreted the snakes in Dioki's ritual as phallic symbols, giving them a psychological interpretation without realizing that this is Clarence's Eurocentric interpretation of the ritual, for we observe the whole ritual through Clarence's eyes.

In regard to the literary symbol, we could cite the river Honia in The River Between. Taking the literal meaning of honia 'cure', Ngũgĩ proceeds to utilize it symbolically as a curative power that cures the social ills of the two warring Agikuyu clans of Makuyu and Kameno. This spiritual healing process is conducted through the two distinct rituals of circumcision and baptism of the Kameno and Makuyu communities, respectively. The river in this sense serves as a symbol of unity between these two ideologically divided Agikuyu clans, for they both draw sustenance from its waters. In this ritualistic context, the river symbolizes purity, birth, and rebirth. Other symbolic aspects of the river Honia will be discussed later in the chapter on The River Between.

Apart from examining folkloric elements in the works of Ngũgĩ and Laye from a symbolic perspective we shall also interpret them from the perspective of folklore as performance. We should remember that in the context of folklore as performance, the audience plays an active role in the creative process, for there is an intimate relationship between the oral artist and his/her audience. The writer's relationship with his/her audience on the other hand, is not as intimate as that of the oral artist and his/her audience. Nevertheless, both authors attempt to recreate an actual oral performance through their writing. Laye attempts to recreate the performance of folkloric narration in L'Enfant noir, Dramouss, and Le Maître de la parole.

In the case of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the concept of folklore as performance is directly applicable to his play Ngaahika Ndeenda because, as a genre that is written for performance, it gives the folkloric elements within it a potential to be realized in performance. Similarly, folklore as performance is pertinent to Devil on the Cross, because it was written specifically for an audience that is barely literate, and for that reason, Ngũgĩ attempts to convey the orality of a folkloric performance. In these texts the relationship between the folkloric and literary elements is so close that the differences between them are almost eliminated.

There is no need, therefore, to overemphasize the differences between folklore and written literature. In any case, when folklore is incorporated in the written literature it is no longer in its oral form and we cannot expect to perceive directly its non-verbal aspects. We can only experience them through the linguistic devices that the writers employ. "Writing", as Ricoeur demonstrates, "preserves ... linguistic marks of oral speech, [and] ... also adds supplementary distinctive signs such as quotation marks and question marks to indicate the physiognomic and gestural expressions" (17-18).

What should then interest us most in the study of folklore in written literature is the comments of collectors of folklore on the relationship between their recorded folkloric material and their observation of folklore as performance, with an objective of discovering the nature of the written folkloric texts which will be similar to those we shall encounter in written literature. Most collectors of folklore material acknowledge the fact that they cannot capture folklore as performance in writing. Smith and Dale, whom Ruth Finnegan quotes, state: "We have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that for us, at least, it is impossible to do justice to these tales.... They gradually lose flavour as they pass from the African's telling, first into writing and then into a foreign idiom" (382).

This is the context in which works like Camara Laye's Le Maître de la parole will be examined, and unlike Thomas Hale, who dismisses Laye's text as marginal in comparison to other Sundiata epics (796), we hope to demonstrate that Le Maître de la parole is as good an epic as any other Sundiata epic that has been collected and transcribed. The differences in presentation could emanate from the purpose for which the epic is being recorded. Richard Dorson clearly points out some of the ways in which different disciplines approach the study of folklore, and how folklore is eventually affected by them (10-58). The fact that Laye is a creative writer must inevitably affect his presentation of the epic, and if we remember that an epic is more of an artistic work than a historical document, we can evaluate Laye's work from a better perspective.

In addition, each folkloric element will be discussed from the perspective of its didactic functions in the context of the society from which it originates, and in the context of the literary texts in which it is incorporated. According to Bascom, folklore like language is a mirror of culture and it incorporates descriptions of the details of ceremonies, institutions and technology, as well as expressions of belief and attitudes. Folktales, as Bascom points out, are more than the literary expressions of a people for they give a penetrating picture of the way of life of a people. The characters in the folktales usually commit taboo acts and break codes of conduct; these actions demonstrate that through folklore, in fantasy, man escapes from repressions imposed upon him by society. It also reveals man's attempt to escape in fantasy from the conditions of his geographical environment and from his own biological limitations, as a member of the genus and species Homo Sapiens.

Folklore also validates culture and justifies its rituals and institutions for those who observe and perform them. It is also, as Malinowski saw it, "a warrant, a charter, and a practical guide", a concept to which most African scholars prescribe. Bernard Dadie, for instance, states that folklore serves as "a lesson in prudence, generosity, patience and wisdom, indispensable to the guidance of mankind and the stability of society" and that the elders in traditional African societies use it to "teach the young easily remembered lessons on the cosmogony, tribal history, social laws, origins of their various products, religious beliefs, social structure, economics, relations with other tribes ... the totemic relationship between animal and a clan [such as the little black snake in L'Enfant noir], and above all the cult of friendship" (qtd. in Wauthier 67). Similarly, among the Agĩkũyũ, as Jomo Kenyatta indicates in Facing Mount Kenya (1938), "The education of ... children ... is carried on through the medium of lullabies. In them the whole history and tradition of the family and clan are embodied" (96).

More importantly, folklore is utilized for pedagogical purposes because through the many moralising tales and proverbs the young learn their moral values. The didactic characteristic of folklore clearly stands out above all other functions and therefore its incorporation in the literary texts of Ngũgĩ and Laye confers a moral tone upon them, thereby reinforcing the message of the texts.

This didactic function will further be illuminated by corroborating the folkloric elements identified in the texts by those found in the Malinké and Gĩkũyũ works of folklore. In addition, the Bible will be utilized, especially in the case of Ngũgĩ's creative works, because Biblical quotations and allusions are incorporated in most of his texts. Laye's Le Regard du roi also could be illuminated by reference to the Bible, for the King whom Clarence meets at the end of the novel is referred to as the King of Kings, a title that is used in the Bible in connection with Jesus Christ.

The views of Ngũgĩ and Laye which they have expressed through interviews, critical works, and commentaries will also be taken into consideration for they will illuminate the purpose for which folklore is utilized in their works. More so, because Ngũgĩ and Laye could be classified among the writers that Lukacs terms writer critics who "were never mere ... specialists in literature. They always considered literature in its broadest relationship to the decisive issues of the social and cultural life of their time" (206).

Ngũgĩ and Laye also appropriate the stylistic devices of folklore such as, repetition, opening formulas, hyperbole, folkloric lexicon, the mixing of genres, mythical time and mythical worlds as can be observed in most of their works. The folkloric elements are an integral part of the theme, plot and characterization, but each author utilizes them for different purposes.

A number of critical methods have been used for the study of folklore in African literature. Lindfors identifies three of them: the impressionistic, the anthropological, and the interpretative. He finds fault with both the impressionistic and anthropological approaches because the impressionistic deals with assumptions and suggestions rather than fact and proofs, and the anthropological gives excessive documentation which only benefits the non-African readers. He recommends the interpretative critical approach for it enables the critic to investigate the "artistic functions", the "aesthetic" as well as the "metaphysical implications" (13). We shall try to avoid the pitfalls of both the impressionistic and the anthropological methods of analysis by utilising the interpretative critical approach with an emphasis on language as discourse.

According to Lindfors, folklore only has significance in a literary work when it is given an important role in it; he says it is the "how" more than the "what" that attracts our attention when we are examining the use of folklore in literature (32, 39). Because of our Ricoeurian position that the "how" and "what" go together, this study shall argue that both the "how" and the "what" are of equal importance, and because of the African writers' strong sense of purpose, the "why" is also significant.

The Negritude movement will also be examined because it is one of the guiding principles of Laye's writing and gives it purpose. His choice of subjects and their handling are governed by this Negritude philosophy: he is said to be "cautiously involved in an act of cultural diplomacy, a mixture of revolt, dialogue and compromise" (Gikandi 2). Similarly, Ngũgĩ's early works and, to a certain extent, his latest novel and play in Gĩkũyũ, could also be characterized as

Negritudist in intent, for through them Ngũgĩ attempts to rediscover and rehabilitate traditional African values. We can also observe within them the same "art of cultural diplomacy" that characterizes Laye's novels (Gikandi 2). Negritude, according to Soyinka, was "a literary ideology that provided, both for Africans on the mother-continent and for the black societies of the diaspora, a life-line along which the dissociated individual could be pulled back to the source of his matriarchal essence" (64).

At the beginning of *Le Maître de la parole*, Laye echoes Senghor's notion that "Classical European reason is analytical and makes use of the object, African reason is intuitive and participates in the object" (qtd. in Reed and Wake 34). Soyinka criticizes this concept because it is based on false premises whose "reference took too much colouring from European ideas" (127). "Negritude", according to Soyinka, "adopted the Manichean tradition of European thought and inflicted it on a culture which is most radically anti-Manichean" (127). Nevertheless, Soyinka recognizes the significant role that the Negritude movement played in the struggle for Africa's political and cultural independence. It is interesting to note that Ruth Finnegan, like Soyinka, criticises the conceptualization of African cultures as emotional and intuitive because it is too reductive and also lends to the detractors of African cultures a basis for devaluing them.

Nevertheless, Negritude as a concept did not take root in Anglophone Africa and its sharpest criticism came from Nigeria and South Africa; Soyinka and Mphahlele were singled out as its most outspoken critics. But, as already indicated, Soyinka has since clarified his position on Negritude and provided his reasons for opposing it in Myth, Literature and the African World (1976). It is somewhat surprising that Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, and Ihechukwu, in Toward the Decolonization of African Literature, do not refer to Soyinka's 1976 work in which he discusses the merits and demerits of Negritude, including his criticism of the most quoted remarks on Negritude, which Sartre made in his Preface to Anthologie de le nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache (1948). It should be noted that Soyinka disagrees with Sartre's conclusions on Negritude.

However, Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa and Ihechukwu, in their brilliant and spirited critical work give us the best analysis of the rise and fall of Negritude in Anglophone Africa, and Nigeria is ~~the~~ classical example of its failure. There is no need to reproduce their entire discourse on Negritude here, but what is interesting to note is the reasons they give for the anti-Negritude sentiment in Nigeria. According to them, the anti-Negritude movement was part of the "British defensive measures against a Nigerian nationalist consciousness of an anti-colonialist character" and had nothing to do with "merits or demerits of Negritude poetry" (201). By doing away with Negritude the "African nationalist consciousness in the Ibadan-Nsukka school of 'African' poetry" was also destroyed, and it was replaced by universalism. The Nigerian case is a classical example of the "derailment of African cultural nationalism", and demonstrates one of the "British stratagems for keeping control of the economy, politics or culture of other lands and peoples" (203). The failure of Negritude in Nigeria, as Chinweizu and his colleagues see it, meant the continuation of British cultural imperialism over the minds of African people in the Commonwealth and it also guaranteed the continuation of England's literary tradition in Nigeria (204-205). We can only speculate what would have happened if Africa's leading critics such as Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, and Michael Echeruo:

> had acquired a strong African nationalist consciousness ... in their university days, what great things might they not now be doing with Departments they have inherited? ... Might they not have dis-established these English Departments and, as Ngũgĩ and his colleagues have done in Kenya, replaced them with Afrocentric Departments of Literature? (Chinweizu et al. 205).

Who knows, but it is good to see that some efforts are now being made in Nigeria to decolonize African literature and a work such as Toward Decolonization of African Literature is a testimony to these efforts.

I am inclined to agree with the proposition of Chinweizu that instead of denouncing Negritude the Anglophones should have "studied it, understood it, and extracted, corrected and improved upon usable parts of its impulses and its purposes" (Chinweizu et al. 206), and that we should in fact re-examine and re-evaluate the impulses and purposes of Negritude because the present historical circumstances call for a revival of Negritudism. By writing in Gĩkũyũ and urging other Kenyan writers to return to their roots through the utilisation of folklore in their writing, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o could be said to be expressing a neo-Negritude point of view.

This observation draws much closer the comparative study of Ngũgĩ's and Laye's works than it is usually expected for Anglophone and Francophone writers. We are convinced, like Michelman, that "the dichotomy between Francophone and Anglophone literature ... has been exaggerated in the past" (43). Most scholars of African literature usually emphasize the differences between Anglophone and Francophone writers, citing the different methods of colonial administration that the British and the French utilized, as the reason for these differences. The French colonial policy is supposed to have alienated the Francophone writers from their cultures more than the British policy of indirect rule did to the Anglophone writers. But when we examine the alienation of the highly educated Africans in both systems we discover that their alienation is basically the same.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o illustrates this process of alienation quite clearly in his writings and, from what he says, there is no evidence to show that the British indirect rule helped to ground the Anglophone African writers in their traditions. In fact, in the case of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and his Gĩkũyũ community the alienation took a more extreme form; the Agikuyu were alienated from their land, the very symbol of their existence.

Moreover, the allegation that the Anglophone writers take liberties with the English language more than the Francophone writers do with French could be challenged. A writer like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for instance, wrote his early works in standard English, just as Laye wrote his in standard French. Even in his

Gĩkũyũ novel Caitaani Mũtharaba-inĩ, Ngũgĩ is still tied to his "exotic English education" (Amuka 5), for he vows to stick to "everything [he] had ever learnt about the craft of fiction - allegory, parable, satire, narrative, description, and reminiscence, flashback, interior monologue" (Ngũgĩ Detained 8), all of which are characteristic features of the English literary tradition. The reason why certain Anglophone writers manipulate English in order to produce authentic African idioms must be found elsewhere than in the methods of colonial administration. The credit should be accorded to the writers themselves, who must have made a conscious effort to create an authentic African literature. The production of authentic African literature, therefore, depends on the individual authors rather than on the dichotomy between Francophones and Anglophone traditions. There are, therefore, more similarities than dissimilarities between Ngũgĩ and Laye in the way they handle their subject matter and language in their literary texts. In L'Enfant noir and The River Between, for instance, the initiation ceremonies of the Malinké and Agikuyu are described by Laye and Ngũgĩ, respectively. They both portray a desire to synthesize the African and European values as demonstrated by The River Between and Le Regard du roi. While Laye records and transcribes a traditional epic in Le Maître de la parole, Ngũgĩ in an epic novel Petals of Blood, records Africa's history of struggle and demonstrates how folklore was the spiritual force that kept the struggle going.

Camara Laye, writing a decade earlier than Ngũgĩ, followed the Negritude tradition by asserting the African cultural values; a concern which Ngũgĩ similarly exhibits in his works and which he later reinforces by a Marxist theoretical framework. It has been pointed out that Ngũgĩ began writing by recording the history and culture of his people and later discovered that the Marxist theory confirmed some of his "hunches" and sharpened his point of view (Roscoe 22). Like most Marxist writers, Ngũgĩ believes that Marxism furnishes "a valid interpretation of all man's interests and activities. The science of politics is not only of paramount importance, it is all encompassing ... the ownership of property, the means of production, the distribution of wealth, the wages a worker is paid, ... as well as philosophy, religion, ethics, [and] literature" (Glicksberg 19). In this context the writer must be committed politically or else he will be guilty of perpetuating the status quo (Glicksberg 19). All these concerns are voiced in Ngũgĩ's literary works, especially in Petals of Blood and in his latest works in Gĩkũyũ, Devil on the Cross and Ngaahika Ndeenda.

Although Laye was not a Marxist writer per se, he was a political activist for he was at one time jailed, as Ngũgĩ was, for political reasons. Most of Ngũgĩ's and Laye's works were written in exile. Through them they fight against social injustices and dehumanizing processes imposed on the African people by colonialism and neo-colonialism. To Ngũgĩ and Laye this dehumanizing process can only be stopped by the utilization of the African cultural values that are embedded in folklore. As Laye states:

> Si l'Afrique ... doit cesser de faire figure de continent consommateur de civilisations uniquement, si cette Afrique, pour se réhabiliter face

> aux autres continents, doit apporter une danse plus rythmée à la ronde universelle à laquelle chaque civilisation particulière porte sa danse propre, c'est notre Tradition orale qui peut le mieux libérer cette danse et rythme (14).

This is particularly so because all the values of the African society on the three levels of morals, history, and socio-politics are found in our folklore. In urging us to return to our cultural values, Ngũgĩ and Laye do not propose an abandonment of modernisation, but a reformulation of the modernisation process from our own perspective, utilizing our own ethical standards based on "la générosité, la loyauté, la chevalerie, le respect de la parole donnée ... la cora et la cola" (Laye 14).

For Ngũgĩ, this reformulation should lead to the establishment of a humane society where the philosophy of "man-eat-man" society is completely eliminated, with "all its preying bloodthirsty gods and gnomic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many". It is only "Then [that] the kingdom of man and woman [could] really begin, they joying and loving in creative labour" (Petals of Blood 344).

As for these writers' exposure to folklore, we know, for instance, that Ngũgĩ listened to Gĩkũyũ folktales as a child, for he "vividly recall[s] those evenings of storytelling around the fireside" (Decolonising 10). Camara Laye also listened to a great number of stories from his oral tradition, as evidenced by L'Enfant noir and Le Maître de la parole, which was a result of Camara Laye's fieldwork, attested to by Richard Dorson in African Folklore.

Nevertheless, by the time folklore is encountered in written literature it has undergone several transmutations. Folklore undergoes changes when it is incorporated in written literature, its elements sometimes appear as full texts or as mere verbal echoes or motifs. In this regard, this study will examine the incorporation of folklore in the following literary texts of Camara Laye: Le Maître de la parole (1978), Dramouss (1966), L'Enfant noir (1953), Le Regard du roi (1954), and his short story "Les Yeux de la statue". For instance, Le Maître de la parole is a transcription of an oral epic that Laye collected from the griot Babou Condé. Dramouss has a complete folktale incorporated into it, and L'Enfant noir, Le Regard du roi, and "Les Yeux de la statue" incorporate folkloric elements as mere verbal echoes in many songs referred to, or as mere motifs alluded to.

Similarly, Ngũgĩ's literary texts will be discussed in comparison to Laye's. Petals of Blood (1978), Devil on the Cross which was first published in Gĩkũyũ as Caitaani Mũtharaba-inĩ (1982), The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (1976), which was written in collaboration with Micere Mugo, and Ngaahika Ndeenda (1977), his Gĩkũyũ play, which was co-authored with Ngũgĩ Wa Mĩriĩ and later published in English as I Will Marry When I Want (1982), all of which incorporate full song texts among other folkloric elements. Weep Not Child, The River Between, A Grain of Wheat, The Black Hermit, and This Time Tomorrow in which songs appear as mere verbal and formal echoes of folklore. Finally, the short stories in Secret Lives, where Ngũgĩ just alludes to folkloric elements.

As already indicated, this study will analyze the use of folklore in the works of Ngũgĩ and Laye that have been published to date. The works will be arranged in chronological order starting with Camara Laye's early works and ending with Ngũgĩ's plays. Because the study will be carried out on a comparative basis, the chapters will alternate between Laye's and Ngũgĩ's works. The only exception I will make is in the chapter on short stories, where I will discuss Laye's "Les Yeux de la statue", in conjunction with Ngũgĩ's short stories. The combination of Laye's short story with Ngũgĩ's stories will not be problematic because a cursory look at Laye's "Les Yeux de la statue" and Ngũgĩ's short story "Mugumo Tree" reveals a number of similarities. The two women protagonists in the two stories, for instance, are caught up in a mysterious world they do not understand.

Beginning with Laye's early works, chapter one will analyze the use of folklore in L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. In both works, Laye in the Negritudist style uses folklore "to flesh out the African world". In L'Enfant noir the folkloric elements are used to stress the strict codes of sexual behaviour, observance of ritual, courteous hospitality and the religious spirit that governed Malinké society. Laye's objective is to defend the African tribal societies from the frequent attacks by Europeans like Hegel, who thought of them as savages, sexually permissive, lacking cultural and moral values. Similarly in Le Regard du roi, presenting assimilation in reverse, Laye creates Clarence and strips him of all his importance as a white man, and then takes him on a journey into the African interior. The African world that Clarence is to observe is both physical and metaphysical. In this novel, folkloric elements are said to "draw a quintessence of values from a far larger and certainly more varied world view of traditional Africa" (Soyinka 123).

Folklore is also used to correct some of the misconceptions that had been perpetuated by Western scholarship. For instance, the false notion that African drumming was a simple occupation that Clarence in Le Regard du roi expresses, by believing that even he could perform without any training, is quickly corrected, for he is informed that drumming is "a highly complex art, which involves careful selection, training and hierarchies, ...--it delves into the essence of things from which alone the apparent, the concrete can take meaning" (Soyinka 123). As shall be evidenced by this study, this is only the beginning of what Clarence is to learn about African culture and what he must view from an Afrocentric perspective. The world in which the action takes place is as mysterious and as mystical as the one usually encountered in folktales, and the central folkloric motifs that Laye utilizes are those of the quest and the dream.

In the second chapter we shall interpret the use of folklore in Ngũgĩ's three novels, Weep Not Child, The River Between, and A Grain of Wheat, for they all deal with the theme of Kenya's independence, and the role of Mau Mau in it. All the three works utilize the same Gĩkũyũ creation myth and the prophecy of Mugo wa Kabiro to justify both the struggle for land and for independence. There is a similarity between Ngũgĩ's and Laye's use of folklore in their early works for they both describe the customs of their traditional communities in detail. L'Enfant noir and The River Between both describe the circumcision ceremonies with the intention of portraying their value. At this juncture, as this study will demonstrate, Ngũgĩ is closer to the Francophone writers in the way he uses the English language, and also the way he seeks to synthesize the western culture with the Gĩkũyũ culture. Some critics, in fact, have identified certain Negritudist characteristics in Ngũgĩ's early works.

Keeping in mind Ricoeur's theory of interpretation that emphasizes the "linguistic of the message" and the Afrocentric conceptual framework that also stresses the social function of literary works, we shall proceed to the third chapter in which we shall analyze the significance of folklore in Laye's political novel Dramouss which utilizes the tale, and the dream motif, among other folkloric elements to convey a political message. Laye, in symbolic language, dramatizes the political situation in the Guinea he returned to after his long stay in France. We are no longer in the serene world of L'Enfant noir, we are, as it were, in the land of ogres. The ogre is a popular motif in African folklore and a comparison between Laye's utilization and that found in African folktales should yield interesting results. The inclusion of a complete folktale in Dramouss further illustrates the centrality of folklore in this political novel. The folktale, in this novel, is a paradigm for the theme of jealousy, as this study will soon demonstrate.

The fourth chapter will deal with the use of folklore in two of Ngũgĩ's most political novels, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross. The central theme in both novels is the exploitation of the masses in post-independence Kenya. In Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ utilizes the quest motif among other folkloric elements, and sends the people of Ilmorog on a journey to Nairobi to seek for answers to spiritual and physical needs. Unlike Dramouss, in which the protagonist is rescued by a supernatural power and symbolically presented with the solutions for Africa, in Petals of Blood, as well as Devil on the Cross, the people themselves provide the solutions to their problems. While Nyakinyua and Abdalla in Petals of Blood demonstrate folklore as performance and reiterate old values, which they then utilize to reinforce the present struggle, in Devil on the Cross folklore is manipulated to serve new functions. Old riddles, for instance, are given new political answers. The Bible, in addition, is utilized to reinforce the political message of the novel. The reinforcement is not only achieved by direct quotation from the Bible, but through parodying its parables, specific messages, and symbols. The inversion begins right from the title of the novel by putting the devil on the cross, to the inversion of the parable of the talents which plays a significant role in the plot of the novel. The parable is manipulated in a manner that makes it yield the intended message. The servant who buried his talent, for instance, is the good guy, for he recognizes the master for what he is, a bad master who reaps where he has not sown. In parodying the parable of the talents, which most African Christians take for granted, Ngũgĩ illuminates the underlying message of this parable in the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism, in which Christianity plays a key role in the exploitation of Third World countries. As Mudimbe points out, "The more carefully one studies the history of missions in Africa, the more difficult it becomes not to identify it with cultural propaganda, patriotic motivations, and commercial interests, since the mission's program is indeed more complex than the simple transmission of the Christian faith" (45). The propaganda role of the Christian religion is beautifully dramatized in Ngaahika Ndeenda where Ngũgĩ, using song as his main artistic device, bluntly castigates the West for treating Kenya as the dumping ground for dead religions.

In chapter five we shall discuss Laye's use of folklore in Le Maître de la parole which is a version of the Sundiata epic that Laye collected from the Malinké griot, Babou Condé, and transcribed. Being a work that is entirely based on an oral performance of an epic, it will enable us to establish to what extent folklore is transformed, when it is committed to writing. To assist us in this exercise, other works that have been written on the Sundiata epic such as D.T. Niane's Soundiata ou l'épopée mandinque, will be referred to in order to compare their presentation of the Sundiata epic to Laye's version. This comparative approach hopes to place Laye's work in its rightful place among the various versions of the Sundiata epic, without marginalising it the way some critics have done. My contention will be that since Laye is a Malinké, his presentation should be taken more seriously than the presentations of non-Malinké scholars.

Moreover, rather than keep wondering why Laye abandoned the novel genre to publish a work from his own oral tradition, as most Western critics of Le Maître de la parole tend to do, we shall look at the whole exercise as that which marked Laye's "homecoming", just as Ngũgĩ's was when he began writing in Gĩkũyũ. We believe that if Laye had not died prematurely, he would have written this epic and other stories he collected from his fieldwork in his own language.

The sixth chapter will deal with the use of folklore in the short stories of Ngũgĩ and Laye. In the case of Ngũgĩ, some of his short stories have the same folkloric motifs that his earlier novels deal with. For instance, the sacred Mugumo tree under which Chege and Waiyaki perform their sacred rituals to Murungu, their god, also appears in the story of the same name. As we pointed out earlier, the mysteries that surround the Mugumo tree are similar to those that surround the statue in Laye's "Les Yeux de la statue". A comparison between these two stories could reveal a similarity between the Malinké and Gĩkũyũ world view.

Chapter seven will analyze the use of folklore in Ngũgĩ's plays. Although all the plays will be discussed, we shall concentrate on Ngũgĩ's play in Gĩkũyũ, Ngaahika Ndeenda for it has a predominance of folkloric elements and, more importantly, it was created by a collective effort between Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, his colleague Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, and the Kamĩrĩĩthũ villagers. The play could rightly be said to be governed by Gĩkũyũ aesthetic principles, for there is an abundance of songs and proverbs. The other plays of Ngũgĩ that shall be discussed are: The Black Hermit (1968), This Time Tomorrow (1970), The Trial of Dedan Kemathi co-authored with Micere Mugo (1977).

At the conclusion of this study we hope to demonstrate: the similarities and dissimilarities between Ngũgĩ's and Laye's literary works in their use of folklore; how folklore contributes to a deeper understanding of their literary texts; to what extent they create authentic African worlds, and achieve their didactic and artistic objectives through the incorporation of folkloric elements in their creative writing.

Can a literature that is mainly confined to writing give social direction to African masses that are still illiterate? Or, alternatively, should the writer-griot exploit genres like those of film and drama if he/she seriously wants to speak directly to the masses? What would be the implication of the adoption of these genres that speak directly to the masses insofar as censorship and the writer's own freedom are concerned? These are some of the questions this study hopes to address.

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CHAPTER TWO

CAMARA LAYE'S EARLY NOVELS: *L'ENFANT NOIR* AND *LE REGARD DU ROI*

L'Enfant noir and *Le Regard du roi* were published in 1953 and 1954 respectively. When *L'Enfant noir* first appeared it was highly acclaimed by Western critics and harshly criticised by some prominent African critics such as Mongo Beti and Wole Soyinka. As already indicated, Soyinka has since revised his position and recognized *L'Enfant noir* as a novel that provides "a deft exposition of the African world view" in which Camara Laye infuses "the mystic properties of the very instruments of craft, the manifested relationship between flesh, word, activity and the objective world [which] creates a total cosmogonic harmony throughout his elegiac work" (123). Needless to say, all these "mystic properties" are part and parcel of African folklore. An examination of the use of folklore in *L'Enfant noir* and *Le Regard du roi* will certainly illuminate the interpretation of these literary works.

Laye started his education in the Koranic school, and then moved to one of the elementary schools in Kouroussa. He proceeded to Conakry to continue with his secondary education, which eventually led him to do further studies in France. While in France, he began writing *L'Enfant noir*, at first, not as a novel, but as memoirs of his childhood. *L'Enfant noir* is said to be comparable to Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* "in which the author's reminiscences have been given an artistic form" (King 17). Since Laye is an African, his autobiography is quite different from that of Joyce's and Proust's because of its pronounced group consciousness. As Olney clearly points out, "Virtually every African autobiography implies by its nature and displays in its performance a communality of existence that is unknown in the Western world" (57). In this regard, L'Enfant noir is more similar to Ngūgī's autobiographical novels The River Between and Weep Not Child, than to either Joyce's or Proust's novel. We should also add that it is the folkloric elements that contribute to the communal perspective of African autobiographies.

Laye incorporated folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir in order to make a permanent record of the timeless values of his traditional culture before they were destroyed by colonialism, and also to understand the mystery within them. Laye's objective is similar to that of the collectors of folklore, who also wanted to preserve African folklore in writing before it was completely eradicated and forgotten. In addition, Laye's incorporation of folkloric elements in his work was a means of informing his audience about the beauty and dignity of Africa's past and civilization. Like Achebe, Laye hoped "to help [the African] society to regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (3). Furthermore, the writing of L'Enfant noir itself was therapeutic because Laye's life in France made him feel so lonely and so homesick that the recollection of his childhood experiences provided comfort to his bleeding soul. These objectives must be taken into consideration in order to understand the significance of folkloric elements in Laye's work.

According to Ricoeur, full interpretation of literary works requires a combination of explanation and understanding, for it is understanding that brings out the inner dialectic of interpretation as a whole. Understanding in our context means interpreting the folkloric elements in Laye's works from an Afrocentric point of view, which regards their inclusion as a means of demonstrating the dignity, profundity, and the glory of our traditional culture and civilization and "for the purposes of expressing a range of experiences in which the white man and his civilization are the misplaced elements" but not for the sake of making "concession to the Western reader's curiosity for or taste for the exotic", nor for the portrayal of the "noble savage," as most Eurocentric criticism would like us to believe (Blair 150).

Like folklore, African literature is functional and the folkloric elements within it help to reinforce its social purpose. One of the main social concerns of the time Laye was writing was the anti-colonial struggle. As already indicated, the colonial system disparaged the traditional African culture so much that, like other African writers, Laye was compelled to correct this negative image of our culture by portraying it positively in his literary texts, a job he successfully accomplished in both L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. Colonialism also introduced the kind of changes that were slowly but surely extinguishing the traditional African culture. It was, therefore, important to capture in writing those aspects of it that had not yet been destroyed. As Ricoeur points out:

> A tradition raises no philosophical problems as long as we live and dwell within it in the naivete of the first century. Tradition only becomes problematic when this first naivete is lost. Then we have to retrieve its meaning through and beyond estrangement ... the appropriation of the past proceeds along this endless struggle with distanciation (144).

Laye's struggle with distanciation was both physical and metaphysical. He was cut off from Africa in both body and soul, and this is another reason why he wanted to reconnect himself to the spiritual essence of his traditional culture, through the incorporation of folkloric elements in his writing. The Negritude movement is an additional factor that could explain the presence of folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi, because it categorically called upon the Africans on the continent and those in the African diaspora "to reassert the cultural values of Black people the world over" (Jumbam 32). L'Enfant noir is said to be one of "the strongest justification[s] for Negritude" because "by its very closed atmosphere" and "by the fact that there is no single European in it" it states that "there is a stable society existing independent of Western influences" (Macaulay 83).

While most critics would probably accept the Negritude influence on L'Enfant noir, very few would admit to its anti-colonial objectives. Brench, for instance, states that L'Enfant noir has never been grouped with the "roman de combat", but adds that despite its exclusion from protest literature it is, nonetheless, "an indictment of colonial policy, it ... describes [the] destructive influences of colonialism on traditional African cultures" (13). Ngũgĩ emphasizes this destructive effect of colonialism on traditional cutures in his literary works that are overtly anti-colonial. There is, also, a similarity between Laye's and Ngũgĩ's works in the way they utilize the rites of passage in their works. The spiritual significance of the circumcision ritual among the Malinké and the Agĩkũyũ is almost identical. Both communities view the blood that the initiates shed as symbolically uniting them to the soil, and subsequently to the ancestors and the future generations. According to Olney, "There is a single principle lying behind the practice of African ... religion and ritual ... African ancestral reverence and worship ... that leads to African humanism and the African extended family. This single principle ... is to be found, ... in all African autobiography" (53-54). Moreover, when "African autobiographers talk about their experiences they are not talking about ten different, distinct or separable things: ... they are talking about one and the same thing" (Olney 55-56).

Folklore plays a very central role in L'Enfant noir, because out of the twelve chapters the novel consists of, eight of them are devoted to some aspect of folklore. It's plot, like that of folktales, is linear and episodic. The story is narrated in simple, straightforward language characteristic of the folktales. In this regard, it is similar to Ngũgĩ's first two novels The River Between and Weep Not Child, both of which have "a linear plot. One action leads to the next along the normal sequence and division of time" (Ngũgĩ 75). Although the narrative voice in

L'Enfant noir is that of an omniscient narrator, the story is told from a dialectical perspective; that of the child that Laye was, and that of the adult Laye looking back to his childhood. This dual perspective is also observable in oral storytelling, for the oral artist tells his story from the point of view of his own immediate historical context and also from the perspective of the historical past of his narrative. It is this dialectical dimension that gives the tales a double meaning, as Laye clearly explains:

> Il y a toujours dans le conte, dans le chant, dans la légende, deux vérités: la vérité première sciemment créée et périphérique, destinée à amuser l'auditoire; mais au revers de cette vérité première, il y a une vérité seconde, profonde, autrement plus proche de la vérité de la réalité difficile à déceler par le profane: c'est la vérité historique (Le Maître 22).

The examination of folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir hopes to reveal this profound historic truth, by extending our interpretation of them beyond the "surface semantics" of the narrated myth to its "depth semantics". Folklore is an integral part of the world in which our protagonist, "l'enfant noir", moves and lives. Each folkloric element situates him in his social cultural milieu and serves as a commentary of, and embellishment to his life. Governed by ethics embedded in folklore, the child's world has love, harmony, sympathy, division of labour, and communal sharing among the people. It is a world of a coherent African society that is still undisturbed by the outside world. According to King, "there were only two French people in [Laye's] town" when he was a child (1). However, Laye deliberately shuts out the colonial world in order to celebrate the glorious traditional African culture with its timeless values. The few times that the European elements, such as the railroad, are mentioned, they are depicted as destructive forces that are a threat to the traditional African values, which are symbolized by the little black snake. The railroad is also utilized as a symbol of destruction in Ngũgĩ's novels, in which it is called the iron snake. By incorporating folkloric elements in his novel, Laye participates more deeply in his culture than he was able to when he was actually living within it. This is due to the fact that a "work of art, ... by its very nature offers a truer, more dynamic reflection of reality than the receptant otherwise possesses" (Lukacs 36). We cannot, therefore, discredit Laye's account of his childhood experiences as James Olney does, simply, because they are fictionalized. In any case, the folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir can be corroborated by non-literary documents on Malinké folklore.

The first folkloric element to which we are introduced is the little black snake. Its theme is triggered by a dramatic incident at the beginning of the novel in which the African child is rescued from a snake he is playing with, oblivious of the danger. The child's mother severely reprimands him and warns him against playing with snakes. Sometime later, the child observes a little black snake going towards the father's forge and he quickly alerts the mother. To his surprise the mother informs him that, "Celui-ci, mon enfant, il ne faut pas le tuer: ce serpent n'est pas un serpent comme les autres, il ne te fera aucun mal" because, "ce serpent", as the child's mother continues to explain, "est le génie de ton pére" (L'Enfant 29). This answer is unsatisfactory to the child, so he decides to seek further explanation from the father. He approaches the father as cautiously and as politely as children are supposed to do in traditional African society. After asking a number of irrelevant questions in relation to the problem he would like to resolve, he finally asks the burning question, as the following conversation illustrates:

> - Père, quel est ce petit serpent qui te fait visite?
>
> - De quel serpent parles-tu?
>
> - Eh bien! du petit serpent noir que ma mère me défend de tuer (L'Enfant 30).

Because age is a very important element in determining every action that takes place in African society the child's father hesitates a little in answering the question while considering whether the child is old enough to be told the secret behind the little black snake. Having determined that the child is old enough to be told the secret of "ce petit serpent", the child's father proceeds to explain to his son the significance of the snake.

> - Ce serpent, ... est le génie de notre race ... ce serpent, poursuivit-il, est toujours présent; toujours il apparaît à l'un de nous. Dans notre génération, c'est à moi qu'il s'est présénte (L'Enfant 31).

Although the child believes the father's story because he was chief among the blacksmiths of that region, he is still curious to know how the father encountered the snake. The child then learns that the father met the snake in a dream. The first time he rejected it because of fear, but when it came a second time he accepted it as his guardian spirit, and consequently, it brought him good fortune. Like Achebe, Laye utilizes the folkloric elements to "sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying" (Lindfors 77). For instance, the child's loving relationship with his parents, as well as that of his father's apprentices, is revealed through this incident of the little black snake. We also learn about the spiritual significance of the snake in relation to the blacksmith and the Malinké society as a whole.

Within the limitations of the French language, Laye describes the folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir as sincerely and as realistically as possible for his foreign audience, who "centuries of materialistic teaching [or indoctrination]" have made them lose "sight of the fact that the appearances and phenomena surrounding [them] are all miraculous, magical ... [and] unprovable" (Howey 35). The tone of the narration gives the reader the feeling that Laye is trying to convince his foreign audience that the events he is narrating, despite their strangeness, nonetheless, are true. The little doubts that are thrown in, from time to time, are also done for the benefit of his foreign audience. The doubting word "peut-être" assumes a stylistic significance throughout Laye's literary works. Of course, Laye realizes that the world is changing, and that the experiences of his childhood are no longer the same, but he also recognizes that his own world has changed more than that of the people in his traditional society.

This point needs to be stressed in the light of the popularized concepts of "vanishing" Africa. The traditional Africa vanished only for a minority like Laye, who had been assimilated into the white man's culture. For the majority of African people the life that Laye is describing in L'Enfant noir is still a reality. As recently as two years ago, a rural community in Kenya went to seek a court order to protect their sacred snake from harm. Personal snakes like that of the blacksmith are a common phenomenon in my own village in Kenya.

In any case, snakes have always been part of human beliefs as evidenced by myths and legends all over the world. In ancient Egypt, for instance, the snake was a religious symbol and was also utilized as a charm to protect one against evil. The Jews utilized this concept in their journey through the wilderness in search of their promised land, as reported in the Biblical story where Moses raised up a bronze snake to save the children of Israel from deadly fiery serpents (Numbers 21: 4-9). This snake symbol prefigures the ultimate salvation of mankind through the death of Christ on the cross. It is interesting to note that in India the snake is regarded in exactly the same way in which it is looked upon in L'Enfant noir, as a "bringer of good fortune to those in whose dwelling it takes its abode, and it is also a symbol of immortality". More importantly, "all over Africa the snake was connected with the art of the blacksmith" (Howey 36). "Every smith who is at work is, as it were, sitting on the serpent's head" (Griaule 49). In fact a Dogon legend states that the serpent is "the living form of the seventh ancestor and of Lebe". The "Lebe serpent followed each founder ... [and] Every night the serpent visits his priest ... to give him strength for another day" (Griaule 49-50). This corroborative evidence illustrates the religious significance of the snake ritual in L'Enfant noir. We should, however, emphasize the fact that snake worship as portrayed in L'Enfant noir does not, by any means, imply that its worshippers are incapable of differentiating themselves from animals. It simply demonstrates that those who can communicate with animals "appropriate a spiritual life much richer than merely human life of ordinary mortals" (Eliade 69). Laye's father is one such human being, for he is able to communicate with the little black snake in a language, which Laye, regretfully, will never be able to learn or, through it, to understand profound mysteries of his culture.

Apart from the little black snake there is usually a griot at the blacksmith's forge who normally sings praises to the blacksmith. In the gold smelting scene the griot is there through the invitation of the blacksmith's female client who wants him to play a mediatory role between her and the blacksmith. In West African societies, the griot played a significant role in the life of the community. In addition to being "a chronicler, analyzer and interpreter of the history of the nation ... [he mediated] between the temporal and the spiritual realms" [and] initiated action by praising a patron and moving him to action" (Johnson 24). The griot's ability to move his patron to action was due to the vast historical knowledge that the griots possessed as demonstrated by the griot in Niane's Soundjanta ou l'épopée mandingue in which he states that:

> nous sommes les sacs à parole, nous sommes les sacs qui

> renferment des secrets plusieurs fois séculaires. L'Art de parler n'as pas de secret pour nous; sans nous les noms des rois tomberaient dans l'oubli, nous sommes la mémoire des hommes (11).

They were, indeed, the masters of the word and, for that reason, they knew how to manipulate the words to achieve the intended effect. In L'Enfant noir the griot is such a poet, for his praise song swells the blacksmith's pride, who is subsequently persuaded to make the gold jewellery for the woman. At the end of the transaction the blacksmith also celebrates his success in song and a special doaga dance reserved only for blacksmiths. The event is a true folkloric performance that combines music, song, dance, drama, and ritual. The praise singer according to King "evokes the ancestry of the craftsman revealing that such work has a traditional standing in the community" (20). As Laye's child persona states:

> Pour moi, ce chant était toujours un grand moment. J'entendais rappeler les hauts faits des ancêstres de mon père, et ces ancêstres eux-mêmes dans l'ordre du temps; à mesure que les couplets se dévidaient, c'était comme un grand arbre généalogique qui se dressait, qui poussait ses branches ici et là, qui s'étalait avec ses cent rameaux et ramilles devant mon esprit (L'Enfant 37).

Through the song the whole glorious ancestral history of the African child is unravelled. As Senghor aptly puts it, when the griot "intones the deeds of a legendary hero, he is writing the history of his people with his tongue restoring to them the profundity of the myth" (57). Like Laye, Senghor also finds this scene to be an uplifting poetic experience because the "poem, the song and the dance - more than the gestures of craftsman, accomplish the work, and make it a work of art" and for him, Laye gives "this abstract formula a spiritual meaning, the living meaning of symbol" (qtd. in Beier 201). In addition, this episode also illustrates the concept that folklore "is social interaction via the art media" and that in its social context folklore "is not an aggregate of things but a process ... in this context there is no dichotomy between process and products. The telling is the tale, the narrator, his story and his audience are all related to each other as components of a single continuum which is the communicative event" (Ben Amos 10).

In addition to being makers of precious jewels, the blacksmiths in L'Enfant noir are also said to be circumcisers who come from the clan of the protagonist mother. The protagonist's mother,Daman, belongs to a clan whose totem is the crocodile. "Totemism is the attribution to each family or clan, an animal of origin as the protector and the emblem of the group which assumes its name and worships it" (Delafosse 217). Because the crocodile was the totem of Daman's clan, they could swim safely in the River Niger without being endangered by its numerous crocodiles. The Pokomo of Kenya, whose totem is the crocodile, also have a similar belief, for they claim that they can swim in the River Tana, with its large population of crocodiles, without risking their lives.

As we examine the next folkloric element, linked with the rice harvesting festival in Tindican, we should keep in mind the fact that folkloric elements are integrated in L'Enfant noir, not for their exotic value, but as a means of celebrating the dignity of African culture and civilization. In the rice harvesting festival in Tindican the child's uncle, Lansana, and the other reapers harvest rice to the rhythm of song and drums. These songs fall under the folkloric category of worksongs whose function is to lighten the burden of work. In this context, songs have a "depth semantics" which goes beyond the "surface semantics" of assisting the reapers to fight against fatigue. They help the reapers to be humanly and mystically united in their work, as if the same soul bound them, and "it is this spiritual community which is [of greater significance] than simply sharing a single task" (Olney 57-58). It is, also, this communality that differentiates the African society from the more individualistic Western one. More importantly, it is at this profound spiritual level that Laye intended the narrative to be understood. The reapers of Tindican certainly respond to what Laye terms "the voice calling from the depths of the soul". The African child's uncle, Lansana, reveres the soil and treats it as sacred, a reverence which is similarly exhibited by Ngotho in Ngũgĩ's novel Weep Not Child. The collective spirit in which the Malinké work is also found among the Agĩkũyũ as Kenyatta explains: "The spirit of collectivism was so much ingrained in the mind of the people that even eating, drinking, working and sleeping were done collectively" (188). Here, as elsewhere, Laye employs folkloric elements to enhance characterization and to portray the timeless values of African culture that he wanted to preserve. According to Ngũgĩ, these values, which were embedded in African folklore, were kept alive by the African peasantry whose alienation was minimal.

Folklore was, particularly, kept alive through the rites of passage in which the young participated in preparation of adult life. In L'Enfant noir Laye describes one such ceremony in great detail from the pre-circumcision ritual of Konden Diara to the actual initiation ceremony. Like the Malinké society, the Gĩkũyũ community also practice male and female circumcision. While Laye describes the male initiation ceremony in L'Enfant noir, Ngũgĩ, on the other hand, delineates the Gĩkũyũ female circumcision in The River Between. Among the Malinké, the novices participate in the ritual of Konden Diara, the "lion that eats little boys". The African child's father assures him that Konden Diara will not harm him. The child has to go through this ordeal simply because it is part of Malinké tradition. According to the child's mother, it is a lame excuse for terrorizing such young boys. The conflict of opinion between the child's mother and father is highlighted by this incident as well as the circumcision ceremony. She definitely disapproves of this masculine ritual that overburdens the emotions of the young boys. This is one of the few incidences in the novel in which Laye hints at the battle of the sexes. The Malinké neophytes are terrorized by a half-man, half-animal creature (terms in which the ogre of Gĩkũyũ folklore is defined) who, by psychologically inflicting fear upon the boys, paradoxically helps them to overcome childhood fear and cowardice and, subsequently, to acquire the bravery of men. The ritual of Konden Diara is a test for manhood and this is where its significance lies. Similarly, the Gĩkũyũ clitoridectomy is a test for womanhood and that is why

Muthoni, in The River Between, insists on being circumcised, even though her Christian religion forbids it. Like the child in L'Enfant noir, who would rather endure the pain than forfeit his opportunity of becoming a man, Muthoni would sooner give up her Christian religion and her family rather than miss becoming a woman.

As frightening as the ritual of Konden Diara is, it is punctuated by singing and dancing, accompanied by the cora and the beating of drums. If there is a work that demonstrates the notion that the African child's life is encompassed by singing from birth to death, L'Enfant noir certainly goes a long way in proving it. There is singing in every event in which the child participates, including his final departure to France. As in the other ceremonies already discussed, songs play a significant role in the initiation ritual. Through ritualistic repetition of songs and dances the initiates are helped to dispel anxiety and bravely face the ensuing pain of the actual surgery. The circumcision ritual is so important that the whole community comes to witness

> car l'épreuve n'avait pas que pour nous une importance capitale, elle avait quasiment la même importance pour chacun puisqu'il n'était indifferent à personne que la ville, par une deuxième naissance qui était notre vrai naissance, s'accrût d'une nouvelle fournée de citoyens (L'Enfant 108-109).

The initiation, like the rice harvesting festival, has a significance that goes beyond mere physical surgery. Through the initiation ceremony, the initiates are bound to the land and to the ancestors by the shedding of blood. Commenting on this circumcision ceremony Olney states, "every individual ... after his ceremonial rebirth [is] really something other and more than an individual: he [is] an embodiment of a communal soul, the personification of a group spirit, the representative of Malinké manhood" (127-128). Having been spiritually united with his society through this rite de passage the African child is severed from his culture through his foreign education in France. It is this traumatic experience of being separated from his tradition that partly explains the nostalgic tone of L'Enfant noir.

Apart from utilizing various folkloric elements for the enhancement of theme and characterization, Laye also employs the stylistic devices of folklore such as repetition, hyperbole, and gesture. Asked, at one time, to state what stylistic devices he utilized that could be said to be authentically African, Laye replied:

> Repetition counts a great deal in my work as in the works of almost all African authors, because there is a transposition from the African language into French ... speech in Agni, in Baoule, in Malinké, contains many repetitions. This aims at making the listener understand, you repeat the same things many times from different angles. So I plagiarize a little, if you want, Malinké speech and I succeed in creating a certain number of repetitions. This means that when a reader reads, he manages to follow me. I have no other technique. (qtd. in King 113).

Laye uses repetition to create a French language suitable to the African subject he is writing about and also to make his works comprehensible to his African audience. Repetition also gives Laye's work a specific African quality by changing "the tone of the language to convey the psychology of an African narrator sensitive to his own language in which repetition is used for emphasis" (King 114). A good example of repetition is illustrated by the following speech made by an elder to one of the novices during the circumcision ceremony:

> - Toi, disait-il, écoute! Ta famille a toujours été amie de la mienne; ton grand-père est l'ami de mon père, ton père est mon ami, et toi, tu est l'ami de mon fils" (L'Enfant noir 110).

There is also repetition in the description of the circumcision events which cover a period of six days. To convey the repetitiveness of the events Laye describes them six times and then represents the events of the final day in the same repetitive fashion describing the novices coba dance in which the chant is repeated over and over again without changing a single word. Here for the first time, Laye includes Malinké words to emphasize the repetitive nature of the coba dance. It must be admitted that in this episode Laye departs from standard French and the Flaubertian style he is supposed to emulate. As a matter of fact, his style is dictated by the African content of his narrative.

Gesture is the other stylistic folkloric feature that Laye utilizes in L'Enfant noir and the most significant gestures in the novel are the blacksmith's caresses of the little black snake and the snake's tremulous response. Each time the blacksmith caresses the little black snake it responds with a tremor that shows that it has understood the message. The snake and the blacksmith share a code which only the two of them can understand. To the observing African child it seems like a language that he would never learn, because his foreign education has already alienated him from the context in which it is learned.

While in L'Enfant noir the African child journeys away from home towards his assimilation into the French culture, in Le Regard du roi, Clarence, the archetypal white man, journeys from his northern white culture, through the African forest to the South to seek employment from the African king, and, finally, gets assimilated into the African culture. Like the African child who is forced by his colonial circumstances to depart from his culture, Clarence is forced by circumstances beyond his control to depart from his own culture. In Le Regard du roi the assimilation process is reversed for the purposes of demonstrating that the African culture is not only as dignified as the white man's culture, but much better, and for that reason it is worthwhile for the white man to be assimilated into it.

Folklore plays a very important role in Le Regard du roi because it "can be read as a traditional African tale. Its narrative structure [is] typical of the oral tale and complementary to its didactic intention: the transformation of an initial attribute to its opposite" (Julien 798). Transformation is only one of the oral narrative structures that Laye employs in Le Regard du roi and Clarence is its best example. Beginning as a proud white man who, supposedly, knows everything about Africa in the first scene of the novel, Clarence is transformed into a humble, Africanized white man by the end of it. Viewed from Clarence's limited perspective, Akissi, the "wife" he is given in Aziana, also undergoes several transformations, because every night she presumedly changes into a different woman. As in folktales, both the locality of its setting and the historical period in which the action takes place are unspecified. In the style of a traditional griot, Laye takes us to a period of "once upon a time" when there lived in Africa great Kings who ruled over vast empires. It is certainly a period that goes mythically into the distant past, which is far beyond that of L'Enfant noir. As Soyinka states, "The territory [of Le Regard du roi] remains unlocated, anthropological specificities are ignored; Camara Laye's private mythology fills up the terrain, utilizing credible norms of social relationships" (123). As in folkloric narratives, the initial situation in the novel is that of lack and the whole plot, in Proppian structural terms, is that of "lack, lack liquidated" because Clarence's lack is finally eliminated.

In L'Enfant noir Laye wanted to understand the mystery of his traditional culture and to explain it to his foreign audience, but in Le Regard du roi he desired to give the white man the opportunity to observe the African culture from close quarters and learn its truth from the Africans themselves. The white man this time is the apprentice to the African. We could, in fact, classify Le Regard du roi as "roman d'apprentissage" (Porter 150), in which Clarence's education is conducted through folklore. When we first meet Clarence, he is on a crowded esplanade, among Africans, waiting to meet the King in order to ask him for employment. Clarence is jobless and homeless; having been thrown out of a European style hotel because of gambling. Clarence hopes to get a job from the King, because he is under the false assumption that his whiteness gives him the licence to speak to the king. But Clarence soon finds out that he is sadly mistaken, because in the African world in which he is operating, his whiteness as well as his Western thinking is irrelevant. As Soyinka rightly states, "By casting an outsider, Clarence, in the central role, Camara Laye proceeds to draw out a quintessence of values from a far larger and certainly more varied world view of traditional Africa than was possible" in L'Enfant noir (123).

To educate the protagonist into African ways, Laye chooses no better persons than the beggar and two little "brats" known as Nagoa and Noaga whom Clarence can hardly differentiate, a factor that demonstrates his inability to interpret African culture. Clarence's first lesson on African culture begins on the crowded esplanade where he characterizes an amateurish African dance as good dancing, a misconception that probably emanates from some anthropological accounts of African folklore. The beggar quickly corrects this misconception by informing Clarence that what he has just seen is not good dancing, because the boys are simply jumping up and down. But at this juncture Clarence still thinks that he knows a great deal about African culture, an opinion which the beggar does not share, as the following conversation between them illustrates:

> Clarence observa les danseurs un long moment. C'était la première fois qu'il assistait à une danse du pays; et la nouveauté, l'étrangeté un peu barbare du spectacle, avait de quoi arrêter ses regards.
>
> - Ils dansent bien, dit-il finalement à voix haute.

> - Un des géants noirs, à coté de lui, le toisa sans amitié.
>
> - Vous appelez cela "danser"? fit il aigrement. J'appelle cela "sautiller" tout au plus. "Eh bien, oui, ils sautillent, pensa Clarence; ils sautillent, mais ils dansent aussi; c'est certainement là leur façon de danser".
>
> - Ils ne savent pas danser, poursuivit le noir; ils ... Mais il laissa sa phrase en suspens pour cracher avec mépris sur le sol rouge.
>
> - Tout à l'heure, oui, vous verrez danser, acheva-t-il après avoir craché. Vous verrez danser quand le roi (Le Regard 13).

In this episode Clarence is still suffering from a superiority complex and is also still "the self-assured colonialist who imagines that he can pass judgement on things he knows nothing about" (Porter 151), as the condescending tone in "ils sautillent, mais ils dansent aussi; c'est certainement là leur façon de danser" further reveals. By highlighting Clarence's condescending tone and the beggar's reaction to it, Laye expresses his anti-colonial sentiments which most Eurocentric critics simply gloss over and instead over-emphasize the white man's redemption at the end of the novel. This kind of interpretation tends to obscure the African message of Le Regard du roi which is to demonstrate Africa's contribution to global civilization. This kind of mystification was prevalent in the colonial period and unfortunately still persists in certain quarters. Chinweizu states that what he had "been conditioned to accept as reality was, more often than not, a misinterpretation of reality, a mystifying, official misinterpretation of events and of the world by colonial and neo-colonial interests" (xi).

Continuing in his misconception of African folklore Clarence assumes that he can be hired as a drummer boy since, according to him, drumming is a simple task. Once more the beggar straightens out Clarence's erroneous concept of African drumming by explaining to him that: "ce n'est pas là un simple emploi" because "les timbaliers sont de caste noble et, chez eux, l'emploi est héréditaire" (Le Regard 38). For that reason Clarence's drumming would make no sense. Furthermore, drumming is "a highly complex art which invokes careful selection, training and hierarchies, including its functional integration into the comprehensive understanding of society.... it delves into the essence of things from which alone the apparent, the concrete can take meaning" (Soyinka 123). The specialized characteristic of African drumming is also corroborated by Finnegan who points out that African "drumming is a highly specialized activity, with a period apprenticeship and exclusive membership" (498). Moreover, the drum is more than a percussion instrument because it has a language of its own and a spiritual character which is integrated into the rituals for which it performs. It is only played by special practitioners who are fully trained for it. Training is a very important aspect of African folklore which some of the renowned Western anthropologists like Goody would like to deny; this is evidenced by his report on the LoDagaa Bagre, in which he claims that the systematic learning of the Bagre is very rare and partial (168). In the context of such Western scholars of African culture like Goody who negate the significance of training in African foklore, Laye's novel becomes even more important, and the beggar's comments to Clarence, in this episode on African drumming, becomes even more significant in the light of the anti-colonial struggle. It is through the beggar that Laye expresses his anti-colonial sentiments by undermining Clarence's colonialist presumptions, self-confidence and audacity as revealed in this beggar's statement, "les blancs pensent qu'ils savent tout.... Et que savent-ils?" (Le Regard 38). As Clarence soon discovers, he knows nothing about African culture which is transmitted through folklore.

Most critics usually acknowledge the allegorical nature of Le Regard du roi without recognizing the fact that in an allegory every element and every character is symbolic. The beggar, for instance, symbolizes the African people who for centuries had been treated as underdogs by the supposedly superior white race which Clarence represents. The beggar is also the spokesperson of the African point of view, a role that has hardly been recognized by past critics of the novel. There is also a reversal of roles in relation to whites versus blacks. Clarence assumes the role of the beggar, even of a beggar's beggar, for he now has to beg for a job from the King through the African beggar. The role of the beggar, as a guide and a helper, is similar to the one played by the underdogs in African and European folktales. In the tales it is usually the "little" people, both in stature and status, who help the heroes out of difficult situations and, where there is a contest, the little people normally triumph over the bigger and stronger characters. Kabira commenting on the moral tone of the tales states: "In largely communalistic communities social heroes ... very often [are] ordinary members of the society....

In most narratives created in these communities, the oral narrator can actually be called the artist of the little people" (1).

In addition to being a helper, a guide, and a representative of "little" people, the beggar is also a trickster. The beggar tricks Clarence into believing that he has found a job at Aziana, when in fact he has sold him to serve as a stud to the naba's wives. The unsuspecting Clarence fails to interpret the clue to this trickery conveyed by the glitter in the beggar's eyes. Gestures are one of the chief characteristics of folkloric communication and in Laye's works, eyes play a significant role in this non-verbal form of communication. These include the eyes of the beggar, the eyes of the king, and later in the short story, the eyes of the statue. Clarence fails to read the message communicated by the beggar's eyes because being a foreigner he does not share the African folkloric codes of communication in which gestures play a key role. It is not only the gestures that are incomprehensible to Clarence but also "the meanings of words [that he thought he knew] such as 'luck', 'favour', 'merit', 'pity' and 'grace' [which are not] intelligible to him until he finally enters the radiance of the king" (Cochrane 124).

Like the beggar, the twins, Nagoa and Noaga, play the dual role of helper and trickster. In the episode of the Kafka-like trial, in Adrame, the twins play a practical joke on Clarence by stealing his coat from the inn keeper, and letting him go through the mock trial for stealing his own coat, after he had given it to the inn keeper as payment for his outstanding debt. As helpers, the boys assist the beggar to guide Clarence through the forest and they also explain African customs to him. Clarence, on his part, plays the role of dupe up to the last part of the novel when the master of ceremonies reveals the secret of the nature of Clarence's job. The revelation of his role as the naba's stud makes Clarence feel so guilty that he runs away from everybody. While he is on this escapade, Clarence's sexual guilt is confirmed by a dream he has about fish women. Like in L'Enfant noir, Laye utilizes the dream to reveal certain hidden truths about the characters.

Apart from utilizing the beggar to set the record straight about African folklore, Laye also utilizes him as Clarence's guide in his spiritual quest through the African forest to the south, where Clarence hopes to end his quest by meeting the King. In folklore, the forest is a symbol of initiation and the hero must go through initiation before he attains his intended goal. During this period of initiation the hero must overcome certain obstacles in order to prove his worth for the reward that usually awaits him at the end of his trials and tribulations. By going through the African forest, led by the beggar and the boys, Clarence slowly gets initiated into the African culture. Like the boys' initiation ceremony in L'Enfant noir in which songs are used as a form of intoxication, Clarence is intoxicated by the forest odours which from time to time overwhelm him and send him to sleep. The odours also symbolize the intuitive mode of recognition that the Negritude philosophy defined as African, and as such diametrically opposed to the Western rationalistic mode of thinking. To understand the African world Clarence must do so intuitively and that is probably why Laye puts his rational mind to sleep. As

Soyinka aptly expresses it:

> Penetration of Laye's African world is only possible from a passive immersion in its reality: each seemingly disparate manifestation of that reality is indispensable to its fullness of separation from occidental world, and from the traditional one-dimensional conception of African reality - a largely anthropological creation (123).

While the beggar confidently leads Clarence through the numerous forest paths and steadily advances to their destination in Aziana, Clarence thinks that the journey is going in circles. Clarence's disorientation in the forest further illustrates his inability to comprehend African culture.

Clarence's spiritual quest could be compared to that of Dante's and the Pilgrim's, as well as the villagers of Ilmorog in Petals of Blood who also made journeys in search of spiritual fulfilment. Unlike Cochrane who believes that "Dante, guided by Virgil, has a vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, while Clarence [only] experiences the horrors of the nether regions" (123), I postulate that Clarence's experiences could be characterized as those of "Hell", "Purgatory" and "Paradise"taken together. His experiences in the forest, for instances, could be seen as those of "Hell", those in Aziana as those in "Purgatory", and his union with the King as his attainment of "Paradise".

Without wishing to rehearse the arguments that have been advanced by many critics about Kafka's influence on Laye, I would like to bring out a totally different interpretation of Laye's utilization of Kafka's model. From a folkloristic point of view, we could postulate that like a traditional griot who usually employs familiar objects from his historical period to illustrate or clarify certain unfamiliar objects in the tale, for the benefit of his audience, Laye borrowed from Kafka's novel the image of endless corridors, with which his French audience would be acquainted, to illustrate the remote complex palace of an ancient African kingdom. In addition, the corridors assisted him to delineate the mysterious complexity of Clarence's spiritual quest. The corridors could be said to symbolize the spiritual labyrinth through which the soul must pass before reaching the eternal light at the end of its journey. Unlike Kafka's heroes who have no hope of reaching the eternal light, Laye's hero finally comes out of the dark forest into the glorious radiance of the King.

The image of the corridors is utilized several times in the novel. In Adrame, for instance, Clarence runs through a maze of corridors at the king's court as he tries to escape from a miscarriage of justice and is unexpectedly helped by a half-naked girl who turns out to be the judge's daughter. As in the world of folktales, where the real and the surreal intermingle, Clarence's world is also unstable and keeps shifting from the natural to the supernatural. The paths in the forest seem like endless corridors without an exit, but the beggar sees them clearly and he finally guides Clarence to his destination in Aziana. In Aziana there are still more corridors that lead Clarence to the courtroom and the harem where he discovers the truth about his lascivious existence and in this incident the corridors symbolize Clarence's complex journey to self discovery.

Clarence's self discovery includes learning to differentiate his own concept of time from that of the African world in which he is living. While in his Western world time is linear and historical or diachronic, in the African world time is cyclical, mythical, and synchronic. This factor becomes more apparent as Clarence's "spiritual and psychological experiences and [his] quests ... deepen both in range of alienation from conventional [Western] logic and rationality, and as the stylistic representation of this process increasingly assumes a ritualistic form" (Anozie 68). This mythical time, according to Anozie, moves backwards from "sasa" (now) period to the "Zamani" (past) period (57), and it is what Eliade calls sacred time which is outside of historic time. "In order to conquer Historic time one must work backwards into the past", for by going backwards "one attains the beginning of Time and enters the timeless - the eternal present which preceded the temporal experience inaugurated by the 'fall' into human existence" (Eliade 50). When Laye talks of preserving the "timeless values of Africa", it is precisely this sacred timelessness that he is referring to and not to the unchanging nature of African values, as most critics have erroneously perceived. Furthermore, this mythical time, in which the characters in Le Regard du roi are operating, is dramatically opposed to the Western concept of time because "In Western or technological society time is a commodity which must be utilized, sold, and bought; but in traditional African life, time has to be created or produced; Man is not a slave of time; ... he makes as much time as he wants" (Mbiti 24-25). This is why Diallo the blacksmith keeps making several axes of the same type without feeling that he is wasting time, because the perfect axe that Diallo seeks to make is for the king who operates outside historic time.

The first time this mythical time is referred to is in the opening scene in Adrame, in which Clarence and the beggar are discussing African dancing. When Clarence characterizes the performance he has just watched as good dancing, the beggar informs him that he will see good dancing when the King arrives. Clarence with his Western frame of mind which is used to exactitude time, wants to know exactly what time the King would arrive. The beggar answers him in folkloric fashion, "at the appointed time". Unaware of how time is perceived in the African world in which he is operating, Clarence still insists on knowing exactly what time "the appointed time" is. While Clarence is referring to the historic time that is calculated by use of clocks, the beggar is referring to the mythical time which is only known to the King. The idea of the King coming at the appointed time which only he knows, echoes the Biblical reference to the second coming of Christ, whose time is only known to God. The Biblical reference further underlines Clarence's spiritual quest and the mythical characteristic of the time being referred to in this episode. The second reference to mythical time is later in the same episode when we are told that the drums are announcing the coming of the King of Kings, a title that is usually utilized in the Bible in reference to Jesus Christ. Laye's utilization of Biblical symbols is similar to Ngũgĩ's, who uses the Biblical myths and symbols in his literary works more extensively than Laye for didactic purposes. The third and last reference to mythical time is in the episode in which

Clarence visits Dioki, the snake charming, medicine woman and prophetess, in order to find out, once and for all, whether the King is truly coming. Clarence, who has been waiting for two years, has finally run out of patience and is also tired of hearing of the King's coming from all these confident Africans: the beggar, the boys, Diallo, the blacksmith, and the naba, whose assurances have not yet materialized. From Clarence's materialistic point of view all he can see are "months and years go by" and that "wonderful day" of the King's coming as "so vague and unpredictable that one ceases to believe in it". To clear Clarence's doubts the boys suggest that he visits Dioki who, they are certain, knows the time of the King's arrival. Although he is sceptical about Dioki's prophetic powers, Clarence agrees to visit her for the fun of it. Clarence's disparagement of African beliefs and customs is revealed in the conversation he has with Akissi and the boys just before he visits Dioki. Despite his negative attitude towards Dioki, the boys instruct him on how to behave towards her and what present to take to her. The following conversation between Clarence and Dioki further illustrates the mythical time in which Dioki and her African world operate and the historic time in which Clarence and his Eurocentric world function:

> - Quand le roi s'assoira-t-il sous la galerie du naba? demanda Clarence ...
>
> - Le roi vient! dit-elle en levant soudain les bras.
>
> - Il y a des années qu'on ne cesse de me le répéter, dit Clarence.
>
> - Mais cette fois, il vient vraiment! Il quitte le palais et il vient. Il

> enfourche son cheval, et ses pages l'environnent, ses vassaux lui ouvrent le chemin. Le grand nuage rouge monte droit vers le ciel comme une colonne, le nuage couvre le ciel ... Comprends-moi bien, pauvre homme blanc: le roi est en route (*Le Regard* 218-219).

Dioki, like the beggar in the first scene, realizes that Clarence is unable to understand the African method of cognition which is essentially metaphysical. Communication between them is almost impossible for they are utilizing two different cultural codes: Clarence's Eurocentric one that depends on modern technology and Dioki's Afrocentric one that relies on metaphysics and religious rituals. They are, as it were, "operating from different psychological and spiritual wave-lengths" (Anozie 69). But by participating in Dioki's ritual, Clarence goes into a trance and momentarily shares Dioki's vision of the King's departure from Adrame on his way to Aziana. This experience in Dioki's shrine is his last initiation ceremony in preparation for the final encounter with the king.

In most criticism of *Le Regard du roi* the King is usually regarded as the redeemer of the human soul and on one level of interpretation that is what he symbolizes. But bearing in mind the allegorical nature of the novel, the symbol of the King has a literal meaning also. He has a historical perspective to him, he represents an ancient African King who ruled a long time ago in an African world where "myth, totem, and magic [were] mystical modes of cognition" (Anozie 89). In this ancient African world folklore played a significant role in the lives of the people. It is the world in which the griot "sings the noble into battle [and] gives him strength and shares his victory. When he intones the deeds of the legendary hero, ... [he] restores to his people the divine profundity of myth" (Senghor 57). The beggar tells Clarence that the talking drums are announcing the coming of the King of Kings because every piece of music, instrumental or vocal, had a meaning and the griots and musicians were trained from birth. It is this ancient African world, with its glory and pomp, that Laye recreates in Le Regard du roi.

The novel takes us to a pre-colonial period in Africa when the kings were regarded as divine. The divinity of the King in Le Regard du roi is based on this antiquated belief. In Malawian traditional society, for instance, the divine King was selected by a group of hereditary nobles, from one or two related lineages. He had to have, among other things, wisdom, good health, generosity, and hospitality. It was believed that the health of the whole country depended on him. He was not supposed to fall ill, suffer a wound, or bleed, because his blood could bring sickness to the whole country. He lived separately with his powerful medicines and was served by young boys of pre-puberty age. In addition, he was supposed to create food and rain and part of his body was connected to the fertility of the land. Furthermore, the divine King was not seen by commoners (Eliade, From Primitive 188). The description of the attributes of the divine King in Malawi correlates with those of the King in Le Regard du roi. At the beginning of the novel, for instance, the beggar tells Clarence that the King does not just see commoners like Clarence. The two young boys Noaga and Nagoa serve the King. From Eliade's account, we learn that the divine King was connected to the fertility of the land, and this explains the fertility dance at the end of the novel performed by Noaga and Nagoa in honour of the King. To Clarence, the dance is disgusting, but to the African, the dance is more than a mere folkloric performance because the King and the dance symbolize the source of life.

The divinity of the King was, therefore, an integral part of kingship in traditional African society and Laye takes this idea and builds it up to the level of a spiritual epiphany at the end of the novel. Right from the beginning of the novel, Laye drops enough hints which inform the reader that the King Clarence is waiting for is divine. In Adrame we are told that the drums are announcing the coming of the King of Kings, a title that symbolizes Christ's divinity in the Bible. Similarly, the King's second coming, as that of Christ's, is unknown. Moreover, Christ's second coming is to be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night, and this corresponds to what Diallo says of the King in Le Regard du roi, "He is coming, without any warning, just as I told you ... I was waiting for him! ... And he is coming without any warning after all!" (Radiance 254). Clarence's attitude towards the King at the end of the novel also supports this divine concept of the King. Clarence, for example, feels too filthy to meet the King, whom he considers too pure to look at his vileness. He even imagines that the odours from his voluptuous nights are still hanging on him and the King would definitely smell the odour if he tried to approach him. He wonders whether the King is capable of purifying every impurity, a further allusion to Christ who is supposed to cleanse all sins, and a quality that Clarence soon discovers to be true of the King in Le Regard du roi.

This is confirmed by Nagoa and Noaga, the King's messengers, who persuade Clarence, despite his guilt, to come and meet the King, at the end of the fertility dance. They continue to do so with their "pregnant glances" after they joined the King on his podium. It is not until Clarence's eyes meet those of the King that the radiance in his eyes pulls Clarence towards him. At last Clarence is able to read the non-verbal communication in the King's eyes. Without putting on his boubou, Clarence walks naked into the King's embrace. Like Dante before him, who found the heavenly paradise in Divine Comedy indescribable, Laye also finds this final scene in Le Regard du roi inenarrable. But he, nonetheless, attempts to portray the King's appearance and Clarence's final attainment of paradise. First, Laye gives us a description of the King which, to King, sounds more like a portrayal of a Benin statue than of a real person. But if the King is a symbol of God, who can describe God? Nevertheless, Laye describes the King's eyes as expressionless, his body exhibits both fragility and strength, his smile, like his gaze, is disdainful. His garments are of pure white, and his turban is made of pure gold and, more importantly, he is absolutely pure. These specifications far exceed those of an ordinary human being; they are attributes of God. One of the most significant attributes of God, as defined by the Christian religion, is love. In Le Regard du roi it is the fire of love that emanates from the King's heart that finally pulls Clarence towards the King and encompasses him. With this embrace, Clarence's quest finally ends, because he, at last, discovers the "spiritual world of grace and [the] supernatural love" symbolized by this "divine child-[King] powerful enough and persuasive enough to sustain [Clarence and] us ... on all our roads of wandering" (Olney 155-156). In folkloric terms, this is the moral of the tale and it is this kind of love or humaneness that the Negritude movement felt Africa had to offer to the extremely materialistic and dehumanized Western world. It is also this same moral that Ngũgĩ conveys in his literary works as shall be demonstrated by the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

NGŨGI'S EARLY NOVELS:

THE RIVER BETWEEN, WEEP NOT, CHILD, AND A GRAIN OF WHEAT

The River Between, Weep Not, Child, and A Grain of Wheat are sequential works which are centred on "the emergence of the Gĩkũyũ society from the pre-colonial period, through the colonial times, to the independent present" (Wanjala 71). Our purpose is to investigate the elements of folklore Ngũgĩ utilizes in these early works, how they are utilized and why. In our interpretation of the function of folklore in Ngũgĩ's literary works we shall keep in mind the fact that folklore is an integral part of oral tradition and, like folklore, the literary works are "part and parcel of a social situation and must be approached primarily as a mode of collective belief and action" (Nnolim 35). Kenyatta, for instance, delineates this holistic characteristic of African folklore in his description of Gĩkũyũ lullabies in which "the whole history and tradition of the family and clan are embodied" (96-97).

To fully interpret the use of folklore in Ngũgĩ's literary works we have to understand Kenya's history, which is one of the major themes of these three novels. To Ngũgĩ, his writing is really an attempt to understand [himself] and [his] situation in society and in history" (xii). The centrality of history in Ngũgĩ's creative works has been recognized by most critics of Ngũgĩ's works, but not all of them have accepted its significance in the novels. While critics like W.H. Jordan regard the historical elements in the novels as "unartistic and objectionable interventions", Ikiddeh clearly recognizes its importance (204). To Kenyan historians such as Bethwell Ogot and William Ochien'g, Ngũgĩ's portrayal of Kenyan colonial history, especially in regard to the Mau Mau uprising of 1952, is lopsided because it does not include both the history of collaborators and of freedom fighters. From Ngũgĩ's point of view, the opinions of these Kenyan historians are reactionary, apart from those of Maina Wa Kinyatti, whom Ngũgĩ regards as a brilliant and committed scholar because he opposed the "entire anti-Mau Mau intellectual establishment and described 'Mau Mau as the peak of African nationalism in Kenya' " (Barrel of a Pen 10). Ngũgĩ and Maina wa Kinyatti contend that the only true history of Kenya is the revolutionary history of Kenyan peasants and workers. Ngũgĩ incorporates folklore in his literary works in order to reflect the revolutionary history of Kenya, he is convinced that:

> Kenyan writers have no alternative but to return to the roots, return to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and speech and languages of the Kenyan masses if they are to rise to the great challenge of recreating in their poems, plays and novels, the epic grandeur of that history (Detained 196).

This is a concept Ngũgĩ has held since 1969 when he declared in his critical essays in Homecoming that "the African novelist has attempted to restore the African character to his history", for he has "turned his back on the Christian god and resumed a broken dialogue with the gods of his people. He has given back to the African character the will to act and change the scheme of things" (43). Ngũgĩ, therefore, portrays his characters as having a will to change the scheme of things.

Ngũgĩ incorporates Gĩkũyũ folklore, such as the myth of origin, in his literary works, in order to demonstrate that the history of the Agĩkũyũ does not begin with the coming of Europeans, because it goes further back to the beginning of times, "to Agu and Agu, Tene na tene, world with out end". In fact, it goes as far back as the creation of the world, to Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi, the Adam and Eve of the Agĩkũyũ. The Gĩkũyũ myth of origin contradicts the Hegelian notion that before the coming of Europeans, African peoples like the Agĩkũyũ had no history. Unlike Laye's L'Enfant noir, which supposedly ignored the anti-colonial struggle, Ngũgĩ's literary works are definitely part of the protest literature which emerged after the second world war to support the struggle against colonialism.

Apart from Kenya's history, we have to understand the fact that the Christian religion and its Holy Scripture, the Bible, greatly influenced Ngũgĩ's writing. When Ngũgĩ wrote his early works he was "deeply Christian" and he "was concerned with trying to remove the central Christian doctrine from the dress of Western culture, and seeing how this might be grafted on the central beliefs of our people" (qtd. in Gachukia 4). The Bible was also one of the earliest books that Ngũgĩ was exposed to as a child and the Alliance High School which he attended was a mission school "run under the auspices of an alliance of all Protestant denominations in Kenya.... At Alliance, Ngũgĩ developed a complex religious awareness reflected in the integral use of Biblical references and Christian mythology in the novels" (Cook and Okenimkpe 2). According to Roscoe, "Ngũgĩ's work is the best account yet of how Christianity not only gnawed away at tribal values ... but how it resonated ... in the hearts of the people" (171). At the beginning of his writing, Ngũgĩ, like Laye, was interested in synthesizing the Gĩkũyũ beliefs with what was good in the Christian doctrine. At this early period of his writing career, Ngũgĩ was also convinced that the Agĩkũyũ lacked myths, and that "Biblical mythology [was] widely known by most audiences" (Githae-Mugo 24). The audience Ngũgĩ was referring to was the foreign as well as the English speaking African audience.

Despite Ngũgĩ's admission to the dearth of Gĩkũyũ myths, a proclamation that echoes that of Finnegan's in her book Oral Literature in Africa, I would still disagree with Haring's statement that "when the Gĩkũyũ reach back into their own mythological past to find a warrant for ousting the whites ... their myths show white influence" (102), because it is not the Agĩkũyũ as a whole who show white influence when they reach back into their mythological past, but Ngũgĩ who is both Christian and assimilated into the Western culture. The Gĩkũyũ myth of origin which Ngũgĩ incorporates in The River Between and which he later reiterates in Weep Not, Child, is Ngũgĩ's own version of the myth. Moreover, the works that Haring calls standard collections of Gĩkũyũ folklore could hardly qualify, as such, because none of them were collected with the objective of producing a standard work on Gĩkũyũ folklore. Mwangi's work, Kikuyu Folktales (1970), for instance, was published from research done for an under-graduate degree and, therefore, had nothing to do with the production of a standard work on Gĩkũyũ folklore. Standard works on Gĩkũyũ folklore have yet to be collected and published. The limitation in the structural development of the oral narratives in the said collections, cannot, therefore, be said to be a necessary characteristic of all Gĩkũyũ oral narratives. A good folktale, as most folklorists know, depends on the skills of each individual story teller. Furthermore, the rendering of an oral narrative in writing and in a foreign language usually distorts their stylistic devices. In addition, most of the stylistic effects of oral narratives are normally edited out because "The kind of effect that might please the ear might as well strain the eye" (Okpewho 156). Wanjiku Kabira in her work The Oral Artist, for instance, makes a comparison between two Agĩkũyũ story tellers, and her findings clearly demonstrate that the more skilled of the two narrates his story in a sophisticated and organized manner. In any case, if one would like to compare oral to written literature one should take the advice of Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa and Ihechukwu and use comparable genres (35).

The third factor that needs to be taken into consideration, in relation to the use of folklore, in Ngũgĩ's work is his Western education. Ngũgĩ began his elementary education at one of the Gĩkũyũ Karinga independent schools at Kamandura in Limuru. He then went to Alliance High School, Kikuyu and having successfully completed his secondary education he proceeded to Makerere University College from where he obtained his B.A. honors degree in English.

Unlike Laye, who went to France to pursue a technical education and only wrote novels for pleasure, Ngũgĩ went to University to pursue a literary career. His first two novels Weep Not, Child (1964), The River Between (1965), and his play The Black Hermit, were written while he was at Makerere College. Later Ngũgĩ went to Leeds University in England to pursue further studies. While at Leeds he wrote his third novel A Grain Of Wheat. Since Ngũgĩ is one of the most highly educated people in Kenya, it is not surprising that his main characters in the first two novels are preoccupied with education. Education went hand in hand with the Christian religion because the first schools in Kenya were established by missionaries. Ngũgĩ even incorporates the idea of education in the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, an element that Kenyatta's version of the prophecy does not contain. Kenyatta's version simply states that the Agĩkũyũ should "establish friendly relations with the coming strangers" (43). It is obvious that Ngũgĩ was greatly influenced by Kenyatta's book Facing Mount Kenya and, therefore, it would be safe to assume that most of the folkloric elements he incorporates in his early literary works are derived from Kenyatta's record of them. In his attempt to synthesize the Gĩkũyũ beliefs with the Christian doctrine, Ngũgĩ portrays characters who pursue education wholeheartedly at the expense of larger concerns of the Gĩkũyũ society, the concern to regain their land.

Like most writers on the Mau Mau theme, Ngũgĩ's "experiences merge with group history and become indistinguishably one" (Wanjala 122). Weep Not Child is said to be his autobiographical novel and Micere Mugo indicates that there is enough evidence in the novel "to suggest that the book is autobiographical" (23). More importantly, the three novels Weep Not, Child, The River Between, and A Grain of Wheat are all set in Limuru and its surrounding villages, and Limuru is where Ngũgĩ was born in 1938, at the heart of the controversial white highlands where white settlers had appropriated most of the fertile Gĩkũyũ lands. For that reason, land is among the key issues in Weep Not, Child.

Stylistically The River Between, Weep Not, Child and A Grain of Wheat do not exhibit as much influence from Gĩkũyũ folklore as the later works do. According to Amuka, Ngũgĩ at this early stage "wrote for the bourgeois, then later discovered he was mistaken and that his right audience was the peasants and the workers" (20-21). He also "wrote in 'Oxford style' and there is virtually no trace of the influence of either Gĩkũyũ or Kiswahili on his style of writing" (124). Yet, on closer examination, one finds an ingenious incorporation of "elements of indigenous language in a way which does not detract from understanding" (Robson 4). Proverbs or songs are incorporated in translations that do not lose the essential originality of Gĩkũyũ language, for instance, Gagutui ka Muciĩ gatihakagwo Ageni 'The oil skin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers', a proverb that is utilized to explain why the traditional Kameno community solved their internal conflicts privately without the intervention of outsiders. (The River Between 101). At times, single Gĩkũyũ words are woven into the texts in such a manner that their contexts make them comprehensible. In The River Between "Waiyaki was called by his father who liked holding talks in his thingira, 'the man's hut' (16). Then later in the novel the Gĩkũyũ word kihii is utilized in a similar manner "You could more readily trust a man than a kihii, an uncircumcised boy" (45). Some of the words are incorporated in a self explanatory manner without the juxtaposition of a phrase that explains the meaning to the reader thus: "the courage that had made him [Waiyaki] famous among the boys of his riika was now with him (101). This style will become more evident in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross.

Repetition, one of the chief stylistic devices of folklore, is utilized in these three novels. There is, for instance, repetition of folkloric elements such as the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, themes, phrases, words, Biblical symbols, and images both within the individual texts and across the three texts. The myth of origin, for example, is introduced in The River Between, reiterated in Weep Not, Child, and alluded to in A Grain of Wheat. The first two novels are written in a simple language; the narrative is episodic and its events are represented in a linear, chronological order as in most oral narratives. The lyricism of some of the passages, according to Robson, borders the poetical, a characteristic feature of folkloric narratives in which poetry and prose are usually integrated. Like most folkloric artists, Ngũgĩ creates his novels around the same themes. Athough these folkloric devices are not intensively utilized in these early novels, we should, nonetheless, take note of them in order to avoid the extreme view held by Amuka and Haring, who regard Ngũgĩ's early works as showing no influence from Gĩkũyũ language and folklore. Unlike Haring, I would not call the investigation of the use of folklore in Ngũgĩ's literary works as "obscure and minor" (95), but as central and significant. The Gĩkũyũ creation myth, as Killam clearly indicates, is "the cornerstone of Ngũgĩ's art" (20). However, in his first three novels, Ngũgĩ, like Laye, is "cautiously involved in an act of cultural diplomacy, a mixture of revolt, dialogue and compromise" (Gikandi 2).

The main folkloric elements that Ngũgĩ incorporates in The River Between, Weep Not, Child, and A Grain of Wheat are: the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, and the circumcision ritual with its songs and dances. There are very few proverbs in these three novels, a factor that has nothing to do with a lack of Gĩkũyũ proverbial lore, because the songs are mainly described or alluded to, as in Laye's L'Enfant noir. The folkloric elements in these Ngũgĩ's early novels are, in the words of Lindfors, utilized "to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict and to focus on the values of the society [Ngũgĩ] is portraying" (77).

We shall begin with the investigation of the use of folklore in The River Between because it is the first novel Ngũgĩ wrote, although it appeared second in the order of publication. In the first three chapters of The River Between Ngũgĩ makes a quick summary of various Gĩkũyũ myths and legends, which places his narrative within a folkloric framework. The folkloric elements also demonstrate the fact that the Agĩkũyũ are part of "a living history and legend, and [their] lives, richly informed with their own traditional past, are the stuff of mythology. They are the children of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi. Ngai's people of destiny" (Olney 76). Glinga, for instance, points out the fact that during the war of independence, which is barely alluded to in The River Between, the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin was so significant to the Agĩkũyũ that it became "a rallying cry for freedom from the British" (219). Ngũgĩ, in The River Between, "dwells on the pride, beauty, dignity, warmth, and stability of traditional communal African life" (Gachukia 3), just like Laye in L'Enfant noir. But unlike Laye, Ngũgĩ does not look at his heritage with nostalgia, he regards it as "a worthwhile heritage from which valuable elements should be drawn and learned for sensible adaptation into the inevitable new way of life" (Gachukia 3). To Ngũgĩ, "a look at yesterday can be meaningful in illustrating today and tomorrow" (Homecoming 46). The River Between deals with the conflict between Gĩkũyũ traditional culture and the Western one along with its Christian religion. By juxtaposing the Gĩkũyũ traditional society represented by Kameno, with the encroaching colonial one, symbolized by the Christianized Makuyu, Ngũgĩ brings sharply into focus the conflict between these two cultures. At the same time, he demonstrates how colonialism not only destroyed the traditional values of the Agĩkũyũ but their lives as well, a factor that is fully illustrated by A Grain of Wheat.

In The River Between Ngũgĩ utilizes the folkloric elements for the purposes of characterization. The character of Waiyaki, the main protagonist, is shaped by the myth of origin, the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, and the circumcision ritual. Before Waiyaki undertakes his spiritual journey to the sacred grove, he goes through the ritual of second birth. The experience is not as frightening as the ritual of Konden Diara in Laye's L'Enfant noir; nevertheless, Waiyaki bursts into tears, because the ritual implies greater responsibility than he had ever undertaken as a child. After this ritual Waiyaki's father takes him to the holy mountain, Kere-Nyaga, and at the foot of the sacred Mugumo tree Chege reveals the secrets of the tribe to Waiyaki. These secrets are conveyed to Waiyaki through Gĩkũyũ folklore. On the journey to the sacred grove Chege narrates the Gĩkũyũ creation myth to Waiyaki. Waiyaki learns, for the first time, the extent of Gĩkũyũ land and the fact that Gĩkũyũ land is theirs by divine right; therefore, they must work hard to get it back. Waiyaki also learns of the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro and the fact that he is a descendant of the great seer Mugo. Waiyaki's encounter with his father brings to mind Laye's L'Enfant noir when he was told the secret of the little black snake. In mythological symbolism there is usually a close connection between sacred snakes and sacred trees, a factor that draws the experiences of Waiyaki and "l'enfant noir" even closer together. During the journey Chege commissions Waiyaki to fulfill the prophecy and save the Agĩkũyũ from the oppressor. During the narration of the myth, Chege is so elated that he seems to be transfigured. At this moment, father and son are symbolically joined to their ancestors and the future generation. For a while Waiyaki is confused, but soon he realizes that he has been commissioned to the grave task of saving his people. Waiyaki's character and actions are henceforth guided by the myth of origin and the prophecy. The prophecy gives him the mandate to pursue the quest for the recovery of the land and the myth of origin establishes the right of the Agĩkũyũ to it.

But first he must acquire the white man's education. In a pronouncement that is permeated by Biblical overtones, Chege commissions Waiyaki to:

> Arise! Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the white man's wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites (The River Between 24).

The narrator does not explain how Waiyaki will only learn the good and leave the vices of the white man. This a point that most critics have regarded as naivete on Ngũgĩ's part, because it would be impossible to be "true to the ancient rites" and also acquire all of the white man's magic. Ironically, Chege who is supposed to guard the Gĩkũyũ traditional rites sows the seeds that will dismantle those traditions by sending his son to school. As Killam points out, "Chege fails to see that education does in fact lead someone away from familiar ideas and concepts to new and different ones, to new and different peoples and experiences, he [in fact] sows the seeds of his son's alienation and ultimate destruction" (22). Wanjala also observes, "Education is a virus which eats away the umbilical cord that ties the African child to his traditions" (115). In this incident we are reminded of a similar situation in Achebe's Arrow of God in which Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to school and ends up destroying his tribal customs.

To Kabonyi, Waiyaki's pursuit of education is dangerous because it threatens the purity of tribal customs and rites. In a sense Kabonyi is right, because the kind of education Waiyaki is acquiring will certainly destroy the Gĩkũyũ traditional heritage. Commenting on Waiyaki's educational pursuit Moore states, "Waiyaki never realizes that Western education even when separated from direct influence of the missions, cannot possibly serve the unity and purity of the tribe" (266-267). Nevertheless, Ngũgĩ steers his chief protagonist, Waiyaki, down this blind alley of the white man's education until Waiyaki realizes, too late, that salvation for the Gĩkũyũ does not lie in Western education and religion, but in the unity of the Agĩkũyũ founded on their common ancestry established by their myth of origin. With this realization Waiyaki attempts to convince the Gĩkũyũ council of elders, the Kiama, that he is still committed to the preservation of the traditional customs. But, despite his reference to their myths and legends, the Kiama is doubtful about Walyaki's committment to the tribe and its rituals. The Kiama listens to Kabonyi instead who, like the traditional griot, is a master of eloquence and is able to skillfully utilize Gĩkũyũ proverbs and riddles and, subsequently, convinces the Kiama of Waiyaki's supposed betrayal of the people's traditional rites and the struggle to regain their land. Although Kabonyi is right in his assessment of the negative impact that Western education and the Christian religion will have on the Gĩkũyũ traditional customs, his actions are unacceptable because they are motivated by jealousy rather than the need to preserve the sanctity of traditional rites. Furthermore, Ngũgĩ does not support Kabonyi's rigid adherence to traditional customs, because he believes that African culture is not: "a static commodity which can and should be rescued from the ruins and shrines of yesterday, and projected on to a modern stage" but "a dialectical process" (Homecoming 4-5). To Ngũgĩ, this dialectical process is the only one in which the old and the new can intermingle and produce a new culture for the present modern African society. This is why, at the end of the novel, people leave in silence, with a guilty feeling after Waiyaki's condemnation. Yet, by making Waiyaki lose, Ngũgĩ portrays an ambivalence that puzzles the reader. To Moore, this ambivalence could be accorded to the fact that Ngũgĩ was, at this time, writing as "a Christian humanist not the militant socialist of later years" (267). Ngũgĩ's excuse for this ambivalence is that,

> In a novel the writer is totally immersed in a world of imagination which is other than his conscious self. At his most intense and creative the writer is transfigured, he is possessed, he becomes a medium" it is only in the essay where "the writer can be more direct, didactic, polemical (Homecoming xv).

The initiation ceremony, with its accompanying songs and dances, is another folkloric element that Ngũgĩ incorporates in The River Between. Ngũgĩ utilizes the circumcision ritual to project the values of his society and also to correct the misconceptions of Gĩkũyũ clitoridectomy, which were conveyed by European writers such as Elspeth Huxley, who, in her novel The Red Strangers, overemphasized the hazardous implications of the physical operation, and totally disregarded its spiritual significance. Among the Agĩkũyũ circumcision is regarded as one of the most significant rites of passage. Kenyatta clearly points out:

> The initiation of both sexes is the most important custom among the Gĩkũyũ. It is looked upon as a deciding factor in giving a boy or a girl the status of adulthood in the Gĩkũyũ community ... it symbolizes the unification of the whole tribal organization (128).

By incorporating clitoridectomy, which is one of the most controversial African initiation ceremonies, Ngũgĩ, like Kenyatta, wanted us to examine the facts and see why Gĩkũyũ women insisted on being circumcised regardless of the consequences, as Muthoni's character in The River Between illustrates. According to Kenyatta, "Clitoridectomy, like Jewish circumcision, is a mere bodily mutilation which, ... is regarded as the conditio sine qua non of the whole teaching of tribal law, religion, and morality" (128). Ngũgĩ's point of view is much closer to Kenyatta's than most critics would like us to believe. Of course, Western feminist criticism is deadly against female circumcision because to them it is one of the most blatant demonstrations of women's oppression in the twentieth century. Levin, for instance, is against clitoridectomy but believes that Ngũgĩ's "criticism of the church does not constitute approval of the custom" (212). However, given the way the ritual is portrayed in The River Between through the character of Muthoni, Ngũgĩ is clearly on the side of the Gĩkũyũ ritual because he juxtaposes it with the Christian religion and, in so doing, places it on the same footing with Christianity. Ngũgĩ is, in fact, saying that the Gĩkũyũ beliefs are no less significant than the Christian ones, and that "traditional beliefs and practices did work for the individual men and women who belonged to the faith, giving them beauty and dignity as well as a sense of being complete" (Githae-Mugo 57). Furthermore, Muthoni does not "succumb to Christianity" as Nama states, but to the traditional Gĩkũyũ rites (141). If we had any doubts in our minds as to where the author stands, the author-narrator makes his views known thus:

> Circumcision was an important ritual of the tribe. It kept the people together, it bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and something that gave meaning to a man's life. End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe's cohesion and integration would be no more. The cry was up. Gĩkũyũ Karinga. Keep the tribe pure. Tutikwenda Irigu. It was a soul's cry, a soul's wish (The River Between 79).

To further emphasize the importance of circumcision, Waiyaki is made to say, "A people's tradition could not be swept away overnight. That way lay disintegration. Such a tribe would have no roots, for a people's roots were in their traditions going back to the past, the very beginning, to Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi" (162-3). Even if people were to change, the change must be established on their own traditional culture, otherwise a whole community would disintegrate and become nothing. That is why "A religion [like Christianity] that took no account of a people's way of life ... was useless ... It would not be a living experience, a source of life and vitality. It would only maim a man's soul" (The River Between 162-3). One such person whose soul Christianity had maimed was Joshua, for the brand of Christianity he was practicing was cold and inhuman; it was this type of

Christianity against which Muthoni revolted. At the same time, by accepting to be circumcised, Muthoni demonstrates that circumcision, per se, does not necessarily destroy someone's faith in God. In Muthoni's case, it helps her to achieve full status of womanhood and proper identity in her tribe. Muthoni explains that through circumcision she can have "a husband for [her] bed; children to play around the hearth ... [and also] be a woman made beautiful in the manner of the tribe" (51). When Muthoni exclaims that "I see Jesus", all that is being underlined is that there is nothing evil in the Gĩkũyũ ritual, as the missionaries had made it to appear. Through Muthoni, Ngũgĩ explains clitoridectomy from an Afro-centric perspective.

Structurally, Ngũgĩ utilizes the circumcision ceremony to bring the conflict between the two antagonistic Gĩkũyũ clans to a head and also to build Muthoni's character. Through circumcision Muthoni's strength of character shines through and overrides that of Waiyaki who is only worried about what Livingstone would think, if he found him (Waiyaki) participating in the circumcision ritual. Like most of Ngũgĩ's women characters, Muthoni is portrayed as having moral strength and integrity. In The River Between, Ngũgĩ, is seeking a synthesis between African beliefs and the positive Christian values. Muthoni is the symbol of this synthesis and, by extension, a symbol of the unification of Makuyu and Kameno. But this vision of an ideal society, where Christians and traditionalists could exist in harmony, that Muthoni holds, and which eventually is embraced by Waiyaki and Nyambura, is neither appreciated by the Christians, nor the traditionalists of the

Makuyu and Kameno communities. Instead of reconciliation, Muthoni's circumcision aggravates the conflict and culminates in the death of Waiyaki and Nyambura. Nevertheless, Muthoni's death helps Nyambura to rebel against Joshua's dehumanising brand of Christianity, and to join Waiyaki, who, like Muthoni, was pursuing the ideals of love, peace and unity. Like Waiyaki, Nyambura was now convinced that "a religion that took no account of a people's way of life ... was useless" (163). True religion can only be expressed through loving real people and not by clinging to an abstract idea of God. Ngũgĩ, therefore, utilizes circumcision to bring the plot to its denouement and final end.

Like Laye, Ngũgĩ also utilizes the dream motif to reveal certain truths to his characters. Before the death of Muthoni occurs, Waiyaki has a horrible dream about river Honia taking away Muthoni and Nyambura. River Honia represents a destructive force that carries Muthoni and Nyambura away into a deep darkness that Waiyaki cannot fathom. The dream portends the death of Muthoni as well as the eventual death of Waiyaki and Nyambura, a death that is finally confirmed in Weep Not, Child.

In Gĩkũyũ mythology both man and nature are an integral part of each other. Sacred trees, like the Mugumo, are regarded as holy shrines for their God and also as sources of inspiration and strength that enable the Agĩkũyũ to face the future. In The River Between, river Honia is depicted in the same symbolic manner that nature is portrayed in Gĩkũyũ folklore. The title succinctly summarizes the main theme of the novel: the conflict between Makuyu and

Kameno. The river which physically separates these two antagonistic Gĩkũyũ clans, also symbolizes a spiritual force that brings peace and healing to the troubled souls. Spiritually the river unites Makuyu and Kameno through the religious rituals that the two communities perform in its waters. Taking the literal meaning of the name honia, (cure), Ngũgĩ proceeds to utilize it symbolically as an invisible healing force that brings peace into the lives of Muthoni, Nyambura and Waiyaki. These three characters are symbolically integrated into the river's reconciliatory symbolism.

In The River Between, Ngũgĩ utilizes folkloric elements as means of explaining the traditional values of his society to his foreign audience and also to show that they can be integrated into the modern way of life. But whether we accept the synthesis or reject it like the people of Makuyu and Kameno do, the cause of history will flow unabated "down through the valley of life" like the river Honia.

In Weep Not, Child, the problem of land that was barely mentioned in The River Between is now a reality. Things have actually fallen apart and the center of the Gĩkũyũ community can no longer hold. For this reason, the title of the novel is rather puzzling. "Why," as Amuka correctly asks, "would the child not weep" since he is given no "moral and ideological guidance" (14). The child, as things stand has a great deal to weep about. For starters, he and his family have lost their land. His father, Ngotho, is now a mere muhoi, (a squatter), on Howlands' farm. The title only has significance in the fact that it depicts Ngũgĩ's projection of hope. According to Ngũgĩ, tomorrow is a better day. In any case, the land that Howlands is now occupying belongs to the child's ancestors and the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin provides the proof for this claim. Any action which the Agĩkũyũ take to regain the land is therefore justified.

Weep Not, Child narrates the story of the Mau Mau struggle and the "the consequences of attempting to recover the land." It also deals with the process of "exploding old myths and creating new ones" (Amuka 134). Land in the context of Weep Not, Child, can almost be regarded as a folkloric element, because to the Agĩkũyũ land has a special significance that transcends the economic purpose. By taking away the land, the British had taken away from the Agĩkũyũ people not only their economic base, but also an important spiritual symbol. According to Kenyatta:

> Land [was] the most important factor in the social, political, religious and economic life of the tribe. [It supplied Gĩkũyũ people] with material needs of life, through which spiritual and mental contentment [was] achieved ... communication with the ancestral spirits [was] perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe lie buried (22).

It is against this spiritual, political, and economic context that Ngotho's narration of the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin and his attachment to the land should be interpreted. It is also from this symbolic perspective that Ngotho's love for the land differs from Howlands' attachment to it. We could extrapolate that Howlands' love for the land is idolatry, but Ngotho's reverence for the land is connected with his worship of the Creator, who gave the land to Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi. Like Mumbi, land is "the mother of the tribe ... it is the soil that feeds the child through [his/her] lifetime ... and after death it is the soil that nurses the spirit of the dead for eternity" (Kenyatta 22).

The struggle of the Agĩkũyũ to regain their land is the main theme of Weep Not, Child and the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin is the main folkloric element that Ngũgĩ utilizes to develop this theme. In fact, the actions, psychology, and attitude of the people are defined by this myth of origin. When Ngotho narrates the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, he is not telling one of the popular, amusing tales of marimu, (ogres), that Njoroge's mother usually tells. He is narrating a very serious story that touches on all aspects of the Gĩkũyũ society, economic, political, social, and religious. His purpose is to inform his children that the land belongs to them and also to assure them that the British occupation is temporary. The transience of British occupation was predicted by the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro and Ngotho believes in this prophecy. To Ngotho, all he needs to do is to wait for the fulfillment of the prophecy. To young Njoroge, our naive protagonist, the myth leaves a big question mark in his mind, "where did the land [God gave them] go?" Ngotho answers with an anecdote about the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro. This ancient prophecy had two aspects to it, the white man's invasion of Gĩkũyũland and his sudden departure. Ngotho recalls that:

> once in the country of the ridges where the hills and ridges lie

> together like lions, a man rose. People thought that he was the man who was sent to drive away the white man. But he was killed by wicked people because he said people should stand together (The River Between 30-31).

Ngotho hopes that the prophecy will be fulfilled in his own lifetime. One could draw a similarity between Ngotho's waiting for the prophecy to be fulfilled and Clarence's waiting for the fulfillment of Dioki's prophecy in Le Regard du Roi, because both Ngotho and Clarence are waiting for some type of a saviour. But, whereas Clarence's prophecy is fulfilled, Ngotho's is not. Ngotho's anecdote also confirms Waiyaki's death that had been implied in The River Between and, in so doing, links these two novels together. Through the myth of origin, both Ngotho and his creator, Ngũgĩ, are making a political statement, that the land the British settlers appropriated, during the colonial period, was the birthright of the Agĩkũyũ. The British had, therefore, no right to take it away from them. The myth is clearly a justification for the Gĩkũyũ struggle for their land. Its incorporation in Ngũgĩ's literary works is undoubtedly part of the anti-colonial struggle. It is "an assertion of the [Gĩkũyũ] cultural psyche" (Soyinka 107).

The conflict that was introduced in The River Between is now continued in Weep Not, Child, only this time the conflict is centred in one family. Ngotho's story heightens the conflict between himself and his son Boro. Unlike Njoroge who is a dreamer and a visionary, Boro is a man of action, and as far as he is concerned, the prophecy of Mugo Wa Kibiro can go to hell. People like his father are, to Boro, simply cowards who hide behind myths. If the land belongs to the Agĩkũyũ, as the myth of origin states, then, the only way of recovering it from the white intruders is through armed struggle; not by some miraculous happening which will force the British to leave as suddenly as they came. To realize his conviction, Boro joins the Mau Mau movement and urges his father to take the Mau Mau oath and join the struggle. But his father refuses, not because of his moral weakness as Boro believes, but because it goes against traditional Gĩkũyũ customs and ethics. According to Gĩkũyũ customs, a son cannot administer an oath to his father. Ngotho's apathy suddenly changes during the strike, and he unexpectedly comes out of his mythological cocoon, and courageously attacks Jacobo whom he considers to be a traitor to the Gĩkũyũ people. The theme of betrayal that was introduced in The River Between is reiterated in this scene and is further developed in A Grain of Wheat, in which it occupies a central position. One suspects that Ngotho is attacking Jacobo for betraying all that the Agĩkũyũ people stand for as delineated by the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin and Mugo wa Kibiro's prophecy. But Ngotho's act of bravery, instead of aiding the people's struggle, aggravates the conflict and leads to the loss of his job and, subsequently, to his total alienation from the land, the symbol of his economic and spiritual well being. In addition, it causes Njoroge's expulsion from Siriana school and eventually culminates in Ngotho's own death. Ngotho sacrifices his life for his son because he applies the wisdom of the Gĩkũyũ proverb to himself, which says: "We shall not give to the hyena twice". Ngotho had already lost one son during the white man's war; he was not about to lose another son to the same white colonial power. Nevertheless, Ngotho's anger is understandable because Jacobo's treachery is worse than Joshua's, in that Jacobo not only rejects his own traditional beliefs, but uses his new found religion to manipulate his own people into subservience, an act that constitutes the utilization of the Bible for the enslavement of his own people.

Njoroge in Weep Not, Child, parallels Waiyaki of The River Between and, like Waiyaki, he believes that he is the saviour that was predicted by the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro. He also believes that it is through education that salvation shall come to the hills. But Njoroge's character is not as fully developed as Waiyaki's. Similarly, the idea of Kenyatta as the black Moses, which was a muted point in The River Between and, whose character was hidden behind Waiyaki's, is now openly referred to in Weep Not, Child. The Gĩkũyũ myth of origin is also directly linked to the idea of the black Moses, because the Agĩkũyũ are regarded as the chosen people like the children of Israel, and like them, the Agĩkũyũ will be rescued by their own black Moses, symbolized by Kenyatta. The Gĩkũyũ myth of origin permeates the narrative of Weep Not, Child. In every episode in the novel it appears either as a full text, a reference, or an allusion. Each time the Mau Mau war of independence is mentioned, it brings the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin to mind because the children of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi are fighting for their God-given land.

In this regard, I agree with Amuka that the message conveyed by The River Between and Weep Not, Child can best be understood in the context of Kenyatta's folktale, recorded in Facing Mount Kenya, about the man and the elephant (44-51).

The story is an illustration of how the Agĩkũyũ lost the land and how they eventually recovered it. Like the man in the folktale, the Gĩkũyũ freedom fighters knew that Ngenda thĩ ndeagaga motegi (there is nothing that treads the earth that cannot be trapped), and, subsequently, they made a strategy to expel the white intruder from their land by organizing the Mau Mau guerrilla warfare. The moral of Kenyatta's tale, could, therefore, to a certain extent, be applicable to Ngũgĩ's early novels, for the man in Kenyatta's tale states, "Peace is costly, but is worth the expense". In Weep Not, Child, Ngotho loses his land, his home, and his son, but eventually Uhuru is achieved. It is Uhuru, even if it tastes like "warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man" as A Grain of Wheat repeatedly points out. Kenya, nonetheless, gains some form of political independence from the British colonial rule; therefore, the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro is fulfilled to a limited extent. The struggle for independence that began in Weep Not, Child culminates in A Grain of Wheat in which Ngũgĩ evaluates the significance of the struggle and its impact on the psyche of individuals.

Ngũgĩ picks up the thread of the story from where he left it and continues with the image of Waiyaki whose weak foil was Njoroge in Weep Not, Child. The legendary leader of The River Between, Waiyaki, whose death was announced in Weep Not, Child, is now Kihika. His role is evaluated and the past no longer offers wholeness as it did to Waiyaki at the foot of the sacred grove. The past now haunts the present and the future. Instead of jubilation, there is gloom and fear on the Kenyan land at the eve of independence. There are those like General R.

who are only interested in finding Kihika's traitor. Others like Mugo, our anti-hero, are looking for a place to hide from their treachery, and Gikonyo is forever haunted by the sound of steps, which symbolize his guilt for rescinding the oath. Mumbi, too, has a knot to untie, for she desperately wants to tell someone the real truth about her relationship with Karanja and how she ended up breaking her marital vows. If her guilt is not enough, Ngũgĩ makes sure there is proof walking on two little legs, to constantly remind her of that fateful night. Finally, there is the collective voice, the we, who witness the whole drama as it unfolds. This collective voice further underlines the fact that "the narrator, his story, and his audience are all related to each other as components of a single continuum, which is the communicative event" (Ben Amos 10). The collective voice of the "unnamed narrator" signifies the "collective consciousness" of the novel (Stratton 122). According to Haring, one of the functions of folklore in A Grain of Wheat is to "characterize Gĩkũyũ masses" and to show their "solidarity as they transmit stories amongst one another in traditional manner" (104). For instance, the story of Harry Thuku is transmitted in folkloric manner and built up into a legend. In "Harry Thuku people saw a man with God's message: Go unto Pharaoh and say unto him: let my people go, let my people go" (A Grain of Wheat 16). The Biblical reference to the story of Moses is reiterated like a refrain in a folk song. Harry Thuku is characterized in the same Biblical terminology in which Kenyatta was portrayed in Weep Not, Child, a tendency that is sometimes observable in the narration of folkloric narratives. Warui narrates the story as an anecdote to encourage his audience of the 1950's to rally behind Kenyatta, in the same way that they [Warui and his colleagues] did when Harry Thuku was arrested in 1923. That time the peasants revolted "singing freedom songs and buoyed up with the spirit of their past, [fell] before colonial guns in the streets of Nairobi with the sacred soil of Gĩkũyũland clutched in their fists" (Roscoe 22). The image of the peasants clutching soil of Gĩkũyũland in their fists reminds us of the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, which establishes Gĩkũyũ ownership of land, and also recalls the freedom songs Ngũgĩ heard being sung by women who had just been "ejected from the land they occupied". Their song, as Ngũgĩ records it in Homecoming, is as follows:

> And there will be a great joy.
> When our land comes back to us.
> For Kenya is the country of black people
> (Homecoming 49)

This song was undoubtedly on Ngũgĩ's mind as he wrote this episode in A Grain of Wheat because, commenting on this particular song, Ngũgĩ states that the women through their song expressed a "common loss and hope" as well as "a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable and a collective defiance. 'We shall overcome,' they seemed to say. The women had taken a correct political stand.... In 1923 such a stand had cost the lives of twenty-three people in Nairobi" (49).

The prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro is once more reiterated to illustrate both the loss of the Gĩkũyũ land and the struggle to regain it. Kihika reminds his audience that the Gĩkũyũ land had been stolen from them through force, trickery, and deceit and the Bible was the main tool of deception. Kihika "turns the language of the Christians on themselves" (Killam 59), and utilizes the Bible for the enhancement of the struggle. Kihika reinterprets the death of Christ from a pluralistic perspective that tallies with the Afro-centric communalistic world view. Whereas the death of Christ, according to Kihika, did not change the lives of the Jews, "In Kenya we want a death which will change things ... we want a true sacrifice ... I die for you, you die for me, we become a sacrifice for one another ... Everybody who takes an oath to change things in Kenya is a Christ" (83). From Kihika's point of view there was not only just one Christ to be blindly followed, but multiple Christs. Everyone must become a Christ by taking the oath and joining the armed struggle to end colonial rule in Kenya, which is governed by a powerful woman who sits on the British throne.

The reference to a female leader in England reminded the Agĩkũyũ of their past legendary women like Wangu wa Makeri who had been deposed from her throne due to her cruelty and pride. Unlike Haring, who believes that the story of Wangu wa Makeri "help[s] Ngũgĩ's characters accept the rule of Queen Victoria which the settlers are imposing upon them," I would, on the contrary, state that this story inspired the Agĩkũyũ to fight against colonial power. Just as they had ousted a cruel female leader in ancient times, they would certainly overturn the present brutal colonial rule governed by Queen Victoria. The Agĩkũyũ also realize that most elements in Mugo wa Kibiro's prophecy have been fulfilled. The "iron snake" which the seer had predicted had now reached Nairobi. For that reason, there was nothing that could prevent the rest of the prophecy from being fulfilled. The exemplary record of their past heroes, like Harry Thuku and Waiyaki, was further proof that their victory was inevitable, because the blood that Waiyaki had shed sank into the soil and formed a bond which had produced "a seed, a grain, which gave birth to the political party" (A Grain of Wheat 15). The new party, that the blood of martyrs like Waiyaki had produced, is no longer the old Kiama that was led by Kabonyi in The River Between. It is a brand new party which will lead the Agĩkũyũ to victory.

The main action of A Grain of Wheat takes place four days before Kenya's independence and is presented from the masses' point of view. Mugo is their hero and Ngũgĩ utilizes folklore to build Mugo's heroic character. Many songs and tales are composed about him, especially about his heroic saving of Wambuku during the digging of the trenches. While the masses view this heroic character of Mugo, the omniscient narrator gives the reader a completely different perspective from that of the masses. The author-narrator digs below the outward appearance of Mugo's heroism and lays his heart bare for us to see.

At the beginning of the novel we are presented with a frightened Mugo who is looking for somewhere to hide. For, contrary to what the praise songs are saying, Mugo is no hero, he is a traitor. His act of heroism, that the praise songs are about, was more out of fear than selflessness. It is the contrast between Mugo's real character and the masses' view of it that makes the ending even more poignant. But Ngũgĩ lets Mugo enjoy this folkloristic heroism until the end of the novel when he finally confesses his treachery, characterized by an allusion to Judas, the Biblical symbol of treachery. Mugo is even allowed to entertain the notion that he is the saviour of the Gĩkũyũ people, that the great Gĩkũyũ seer predicted. But Mugo is simply engaging in self deception, a deception that is finally ended when his treachery is revealed at the end of the novel. With this revelation the myth of salvation coming from the hills is finally exploded.

Mugo is said to be analogous to Kenyatta the founding father of the Kenyan nation. Ngũgĩ, in retrospect, attempts to revise the inflated image of Kenyatta that he had built in Weep Not, Child. This is because A Grain of Wheat was written after independence and, by that time, Ngũgĩ had had time to re-evaluate the Kenyan independence, and he came to the conclusion that Kenya's "Uhuru was like warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man." Kenyatta, who in Weep Not, Child was regarded as the black Moses of the Agĩkũyũ, is now symbolized in Mugo, the betrayer of the people's struggle.

Folklore is, therefore, utilized to prepare us for the big anti-climax at the end of the novel. The great hero that the songs and tales talk about is nothing but a traitor. The irony of it all is that by the time the praise songs were composed about him he had already betrayed Kihika, whom the people of Thabai wanted Mugo to talk about on the day of Uhuru celebrations. Mugo is not the only character who is mythologized in the novel. Both Kihika and Dedan Kimathi, to whom Kihika is analogous, are turned into legends. Tall tales of wonders and exploits are created around their characters. Like Dedan Kimanthi, Kihika was supposed to perform miracles and to transform himself into different objects. His capture of the Mahee police station proved his miraculous power, and the Agĩkũyũ believed that he was invincible. But after the destruction of the Mahee police station Kihika is captured and hanged. His comrades, General R. and Koinandu, are unable to solve the riddle of his betrayal. They hope that Mugo, like them, will identify Karanja as the traitor. But Mugo declines to do so, saying he knows nothing about Kihika's betrayer, a declaration that is ironical since we know that Mugo is the traitor. But Ngũgĩ maintains the irony till the end. Everyone, including Gikonyo and Mumbi, thinks Mugo is a hero and this notion makes Gikonyo and Mumbi go to Mugo and confess their own treachery to him. Gikonyo confesses to Mugo his guilt for rescinding the oath and, subsequently, the people's struggle for the sake of being reunited with Mumbi. Similarly, Mumbi confesses her betrayal of her husband by committing adultery with Karanja, Gikonyo's childhood rival.

All these confessions make Mugo uncomfortable, for he is the only one who knows that he betrayed Kihika. But despite knowing that he is a traitor, Mugo, nonetheless, accepts to represent the people of Thabai at the Uhuru celebrations. His acceptance is, ironically, based on the prophecy of Mugo Wa Kibiro, which had promised the Agĩkũyũ a saviour. Ngũgĩ weaves around this traditional concept of a saviour the Biblical symbolism of the Messiah, "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break down to pieces the oppressor" (A Grain of Wheat 77). The Biblical symbolism reinforces the prophecy and drives the point home. When the time arrives for Mugo to play his Messianic role, he decides to reveal to the people of Thabai that he is Kihika's traitor, the Judas for whom they have been looking. The people of Thabai are dumbfounded by Mugo's revelation and instead of waiting to hear the verdict they disperse silently to their homes. A Grain of Wheat and The River Between have similar endings because in both cases a death sentence is passed on someone the masses believed to be their hero. The only difference is Waiyaki, of The River Between, did not betray the Agĩkũyũ; he died for trying to unite them in their struggle. Waiyaki is, therefore, a martyr in the way Mugo is not. For that reason, Ngũgĩ places Waiyaki in the Gĩkũyũ hall of fame, a place where Mugo's name would not, one suspects, appear.

Nevertheless, everybody at the meeting feels guilty because each one of them, in one way or another, had betrayed the struggle. Gikonyo views Mugo's confession as an act of courage, while Karanja sees it as a form of sacrifice. Mugo had literally become a Christ for Karanja, as Kihika had conceptualized it, because Mugo saved Karanja's life, who, in every way, deserved to die. If Mugo deserved to die, so did Karanja, for he had frequently masked himself and betrayed many freedom fighters. Unlike Karanja, Mugo was not sadistic and, for that reason, his "remorse ... which leads him to speak out the truth and denounce his treachery, can in death fire others to a new self-examination" and in so doing "liberate their wills so that they can look beyond the false independence now being offered and fight on for something better ... [for] unity [is] the key to victory" (Cook and Okenimkpe 86). Ngũgĩ, in a way, absolves Mugo's guilt through his act of confession.

Although the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin is not incorporated in full, as it was in the first two novels, it is ingeniously woven into the characters of Gikonyo and Mumbi, who symbolize Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi, the ancestral parents of the Agĩkũyũ. Mumbi, like the mythical mother of the Agĩkũyũ, is the creative essence that shapes the national spirit of unity, forgiveness, and rebuilding. Most critics have pointed out that, the character of Mumbi is put on a pedestal. Her vision is said to have been formulated by the heroic stories of the Gĩkũyũ women of the past as well as "a heroic past in other lands marked by acts of sacrificial martyrdom ... Her idea of glory was something nearer to the agony of Christ at the Garden of Gethsemane" (A Grain of Wheat 102). Through her, Ngũgĩ continues the theme of reconciliation that started in The River Between and continued in Weep Not, Child. Like Muthoni in The River Between, Mumbi is the symbol of unity and reconciliation in A Grain of Wheat. She is depicted as the spirit that can knit people together the way she knits her sweater. The creative essence is both in her hands and her heart. Like the symbol of the nurturing mother earth, her heart possesses love and forgiveness. More importantly, she is the symbol of the original Mumbi under whom all the Agĩkũyũ people are united. For that reason, Mugo's confession makes her feel like reaching out to him and righting the wrongs he had committed, and healing his wounds, since, Mugo is still the son of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi, his sin notwithstanding. She forgives Mugo despite learning of his betrayal of her brother Kihika. Her forgiveness is so God-like that it moves Mugo to kneel "before her, a broken, submissive penitent" (A Grain of Wheat 236). Symbolically, she is the light that Kenya needs in order to create and nurture "a new earth" in the aftermath of a traumatic colonial experience.

Mumbi's reconciliatory spirit is also felt by Gikonyo during his recovery in the hospital and this spirit of forgiveness influences Gikonyo to seek reconciliation with her. Gikonyo, by carving a stool as a wedding gift for Mumbi, is not only demonstrating his preparedness for reconciliation, but is also "appealing to the goddess of creation, ...[and] acting on behalf of or as a symbolic representative of all the Agĩkũyũ in their capacity as children of Mumbi" (Amuka 149). There is some similarity between Gikonyo's wedding gift and Diallo's axe in Le Regard du roi, both are created for the purposes of representing their art to a God-like figure, the king in the case of Diallo, and Mumbi who symbolizes the Creator in Gikonyo's case. Both artists also work with dexterity on their art. Of Gikonyo we are told that "the touch of wood always made him want to create something," especially in those times when he was creating something for Mumbi. The thought of Mumbi gave him new strength and made him free. For instance, when he was making Mumbi's panga he wanted to do a perfect job and to give "himself wholly to the present job" (A Grain of Wheat 94). Like Diallo in Le Regard du roi who regarded the significance of the axe he was making as being wholly dependent on the King's acceptance of it, Gikonyo felt that his job would not be complete without

Mumbi's participation. In the case of the stool he was making for Mumbi, it was not only Mumbi that participated in Gikonyo's new creation, but the whole Gĩkũyũ society. On the stool Gikonyo planned to depict the unity of the whole Gĩkũyũ community, symbolized by the linking of hands between the man, woman and the child, which would further be integrated with the idea of hope of a new beginning symbolized by the image of a woman "big-big with child" (A Grain of Wheat 280).

The only song text that is incorporated in the novel also alludes to the creation myth. It is the song that people sang to one another as a signification of their solidarity during their war of independence. Gikonyo sings to Mumbi the same song when she brings her panga to him for repairs:

> Gĩkũyũ na Mumbi
> Gĩkũyũ na Mumbi
> Gĩkũyũ na Mumbi
> Nikihiu Ngwatiro

In this context the song is sung both as an amusement and as an expression of Gikonyo's love for Mumbi. Kihika is said to have composed the song for the purposes of the struggle, but Mumbi interprets it literally by thinking that Gikonyo was making a joke about her panga whose handle was burnt. Symbolically the last line Nikihiu ngwatiro refers to the broken family of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi, because the Gĩkũyũ community has been "burnt" by colonialism. The song is utilized as a commentary on the destruction of the Gĩkũyũ society by colonialism. Gikonyo's capability to repair the panga symbolizes his potential ability to rehabilitate the broken Gĩkũyũ community through his union with Mumbi, and, subsequently, the Kenyan society as a whole. In this one song that is related to the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin Ngũgĩ incorporates both the symbols of destruction and reconstruction. Colonialism destroyed the coherent society that the Agĩkũyũ had, but through unity the people can reconstruct the "broken handle" of their society. Although the uhuru people waited for tastes like "warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man", Ngũgĩ in the end admonishes the Kenyan people to forgive one another and unite in order to fight on, since, according to Ngũgĩ, the struggle is not yet over, as shall be demonstrated by his more political novels, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross.

In The River Between, Weep Not, Child, and A Grain of Wheat, Ngũgĩ utilizes the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin and the prophecy of Mugo Wa Kibiro as the main folkloric elements that link up the three novels, which recount the story of his Gĩkũyũ society in its struggle against colonialism. In these three novels, Ngũgĩ demonstrates how the Agĩkũyũ, at the beginning, believed that salvation shall come from the hills as it had been predicted by the great Gĩkũyũ seer, and that it would be brought by such legendary heroes like Kenyatta, the founding father of the nation. But soon Ngũgĩ recognizes that the myth of the legendary hero who will come to rescue the Agĩkũyũ from the "swallowing monster" is nothing but a myth. By the time Ngũgĩ begins writing A Grain of Wheat most of the myths have been exploded, since the heroes of The River Between and Weep Not, Child are now symbolized in Mugo, the aniti-hero. By the end of the novel, Ngũgĩ, still clinging to the controlling image of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi, whose roots cannot be uprooted, cuts his losses and prepares to begin anew with the new generation that is yet to be born, since, like Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngũgĩ believes the beautiful ones are not yet born.

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CHAPTER FOUR

LAYE'S POLITICAL NOVEL: DRAMOUSS

Laye's third novel Dramouss was published in 1966, eleven years after the publication of Le Regard du roi. The long break between Dramouss and Le Regard du roi has been attributed by critics to the political climate in Guinea at the time. The book's publication had to wait until Laye was safely out of the country before it appeared. This is because in L'Enfant noir, Laye does not raise political issues directly, but in Dramouss, he openly criticizes the political regime of post-independence Guinea.

The kind of disillusionment that the novel expresses is similar to the one depicted by Ngugi's A Grain of Wheat in which the Uhuru the masses had waited for is said to have tasted like "warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man." The Guinea Laye returns to is far from what Laye expected.

Thematically, Dramouss is "a logical continuation" of L'Enfant noir (Brench 31). Granted, in L'Enfant noir Laye acknowledges that the African world is changing, but the changes he finds are far greater than he dreamed of. The traditional life that was described in L'Enfant noir has changed beyond recognition. For instance, in place of the African art that was produced at the blacksmith's forge, there are cheap Lebanese objects, and the blacksmith himself is now creating wooden carvings for tourists. The tone of the novel is more like that of Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross in which the corrupt neo-colonial

African government is openly castigated. Brench points out that, the novel's emphasis changes "from fictional narration to social comment" (31). For this change of emphasis the novel is heavily criticised by most critics.

In order to fully understand the use of folklore in Dramouss we must keep in mind the broad definition of folklore. Apart from the literary expression of folklore such as myth, legend, and folktale, the term folklore includes customs, beliefs, magic, and rituals. Bascom aptly states that folklore, "like language, is a mirror of culture and it incorporates descriptions of the details of ceremonies, institutions and technology, as well as expressions of beliefs and attitudes" (285). For that reason, we can understand "the folklore of a people fully only through the knowledge of their culture" (Bascom 285). Folklore is also "social interaction via the art media" (Ben Amos 10), a factor that is important to keep in mind when we are analyzing the utilization of folklore in Dramouss, because this is how some of the folkloric elements are portrayed in the novel.

In addition, we should keep in mind the fact that our whole study is kept within the theoretical framework of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation which, as already indicated, emphasizes the linguistic effect of the message. From Ricoeur's point of view, language is seen as a vehicle of communication, and in the context of communication there is always an addresser with an intention of communicating a message and an addressee who is supposed to receive and understand the message. For that reason, both the intention of the author and the message he intends to convey, through the folkloric elements, will be foregrounded. Our interpretation will, therefore, combine Ricoeur's two equations: explanation and understanding. Most critics tend to emphasize explanation and disregard understanding. In the context of Laye's Dramouss it is important to understand a number of things before we analyze the folkloric elements in the text. Like most African writers, Laye's writing is "litterature engagé. As p'Bitek correctly points out, African writers are writing "because of their nationalism and concern for the future of their countries" (35). Laye is able to play this functional role, utilizing some of the techniques of the traditional griot, because he "lived an African life. There was no intermediary between [him] and African life" since his "parents were peasants and they raised [him] as a peasant." For that reason, "the traditional life [was] so profoundly rooted [in him] that the ten years he spent in Paris did not subdue or destroy the African tradition" in him (qtd. in Egejuru 73).

The use of a foreign language is another important point that we should take into consideration, because it creates problems for the writer especially when it comes to the transposition of stylistic features of certain folkloric elements. Commenting on the problem of language, Laye states:

> For me French presents a lot of problems.... To write well in French I have to work hard. One certainly loses something in transposition.... When one is writing in a foreign language one is obliged to leave certain things unsaid because the two civilizations are based on different things.... If you have a phrase to illustrate that something is very white and the book

> is published in Paris, you are forced to say "her blouse is as white as snow." Yet this is a foreign image for an African who has not left his village and who has not seen any snow.... In Malinké we say, "Her blouse is as white as the moon in its fourth phase" ... for a European this signifies nothing because they have no moon, they have no sun, that is the problem. (qtd. in Egejuru 35).

When reading Dramouss one has a feeling that Laye definitely leaves "certain things unsaid." This factor of a foreign language could explain why Laye's dialogue is so stilted and wooden as most critics point out. The French language is incapable of conveying the Malinké "folk" speech that is used in a rural village. Ngugi, in fact, categorically states in Decolonising of the Mind that the foreign language falsifies the portrayal of African characters because their tone of voice and attitude is lost through the mediation of a foreign language . Moreover, the problem of language is not based only on the fact that it is foreign, but it also includes the idea of a foreign audience and a foreign publisher. In order for the African writers to publish abroad, their works must be accepted by their foreign publisher, and the criterion of acceptability is based on what the publisher thinks his audience would understand. This, in most cases, means eliminating certain stylistic features that would be authentically African as Laye's comment above demonstrates.

Nevertheless, in keeping with the didactic purpose, Laye, like most African writers, still incorporates elements of folklore in Dramouss. Furthermore, the folkloric elements also portray the African subject and context of his novel. In this regard, we must interpret the folkloric elements from an Afro-centric point of view, because they are incorporated in the novel for the purposes of conveying the African world view. If these factors are taken into consideration, we would avoid the type of criticism that most European critics levied against Dramouss. For instance, Blair dismisses Dramouss outrightly by stating that "the novel is to the white critic a mediocre novel, doing nothing to enhance [Laye's] reputation as a writer, lacking the poetry, the symbolism, the sensitivity of the two former works, giving the impression of having been written under duress, without inspiration, to answer the Black critics, even if, he cannot restore himself to favour with Sékou Touré's regime." (194). This is a rather surprising comment, because the novel was overtly criticizing Sékou Touré's regime and, for that reason, it could not have been written for the purpose of restoring Laye to its favour. But at the same time, Blair is right in stating that most white critics regard the novel as mediocre, because almost every one of them has some negative comment to make about Dramouss. To Brench, Dramouss, unlike L'Enfant noir, "is more direct ... and more journalistic. It lacks the subtleties of his other works both in presentation and characterization ... it also lacks coherence. It is episodic, even anecdotal in form" (31), characteristics which it shares with folklore and which will aid us in our discussion of the use of folklore in Dramouss.

Similarly, Moore suggests that Dramouss "is undoubtedly a disappointment," because Laye fails "to make up his mind whether to write a memoir or a novel.... The use of authorial persona ... Fatoman arouses expectations of a work of fiction" but fails as fiction, because the historical facts Laye incorporates about his return to Guinea are "not sufficiently distanced or transmuted to achieve the status of fiction" (97-98). Some of the critics also raise similar comments against Ngũgĩ's novels, but unlike the extreme condemnation of Dramouss, the negative criticism of Ngugi's literary works is minimal. However, contrary to Blair, Moore does not dismiss Dramouss as a "political tract", because, despite its weaknesses, "it contains some of the most intense and searching pages to be found in recent African writing" (98). King, who has produced one of the most comprehensive analyses on the writings of Camara Laye, also concurs with the earlier critics' denunciation of Dramouss and states that "Some of its aesthetic weaknesses can be explained partly by circumstances under which it was written. Characterization is wooden, dialogue is often rather stilted" (81), comments that paraphrase Olney's evaluation of Dramouss in his work Tell Me Africa (1973), and which other critics often reiterate. According to King, "Fatoman is primarily a spokesperson for the author's opinions and uncertainties concerning the role of the educated elite, the problems of independence and the future of the country; he is not a well rounded character" (81). Erickson, in fact, wonders why Camara Laye did not "continue in the vein of Le Regard du roi. Why did he turn to an uninspired and uninspiring didacticism? Why did the need to get his message across exert such terrible urgency on him that he found it fit to turn the novel into a social-political treatise?"

(134).

The answer to Erickson's questions can be found in Achebe's proposition that African literature, written or oral, has always been created to serve a human purpose as we have already indicated. The didacticism of Camara Laye should, therefore, not surprise us, especially if we remember that "Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum, it is given impetus, shape, and direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society" (Ngugi xv). It is the social, political forces of Laye's historical context that made him produce a novel such as Dramouss. In that context, he could not produce another novel in the vein of Le Regard du roi as Erickson would have liked him to. In that historical context, he had a duty to use his art to convey the political message to his audience. He had no choice but to "write out of [his] experience" and commitment to an African destiny" (Achebe 10). Laye, like most African writers, is committed to "the visionary reconstruction of the past for the purposes of a social direction" (Soyinka 106). Furthermore, the African writers do not see this task of giving "a social direction" to their societies as optional, but obligatory. "The writer," in fact, "cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done ... he must march right in front" (Achebe 72). For this task of "re-education and regeneration" folklore becomes a handy tool for the African writer because of its didacticism and its symbolic representation of the African past.

If we take into consideration this functional role of African literature, we shall understand why a character like Fatoman is made to criticize the political situation in Guinea at the time when Laye was writing Dramouss. In an episode in which Fatoman attends a political rally with his friends Bilali and Konate, Fatoman criticises the political speeches thus:

> Ce que je sais, c'est qu'il faudra un jour que quelqu'un dénonce tous ces mensonges. Il faudra dire que si la colonisation, vilipendée par ce comité, a été un mal pour notre pays, le régime que vous êtes en train d'y introduire sera, lui, une catastrophe, dont les méfaits s'etendront sur des dizaines d'années. Il faudra dire qu'un régime qui se bâtit dans le sang, par les soins des incendiaires de cases et de maisons, n'est qu'un régime d'anarchie et de dictature, un régime fondé sur la violence, et que détruira la violence.... Il faudra dire que la violence que vous êtes en train d'instaurer dans ce pays sera payée par chacun de vous, et plus encore par les innocents. Il faudra surtout, pour bâtir une société viable, plus d'actions concrètes et honnêtes, moins de discours, plus de respect de l'opinion d'autrui, plus d'amour fraternel (Dramouss 185-186).

Laye then utilizes the folkloric motif of a dream to dramatize the opposition to the kind of lies that the political rhetoric was perpetuating. In the dream, the crucial role that the writer will play in bringing about social change is underlined by the propelling pencil, the symbol of the artist, that Dramouss gives to Fatoman. In the context of the political events that had taken place in Guinea, it would be naive to expect Laye to produce a novel similar to the sweet nostalgic tale like L'Enfant noir or one centred on the redemption of a white man like Le Regard du roi. It would be an oversight on my part if I did not point out that some of the African critics also regurgitate the negative criticism of Dramouss that we have already indicated. As recently as 1986, Nkashama in his article "The Golden Years of the Novel" outrightly dismisses Dramouss as "Badly composed, slovenly written ... overwhelmingly autobiographical" (515).

We could alleviate some of these negative criticism of Dramouss by taking into consideration the fact that it is an African novel being written for didactic purposes. It is also for this same reason that some of the characters are not the usual "round" characters of canonized western novels. Ezekiel Mphahlele further clarifies this point by stating that the lack of round characters has "to do with the African's view of life, and ... the way we tell stories. In our traditional stories emphasis is not on character, it is a kind of epic. Things just roll and roll; just happen to a character; he could go on forever" (qtd. in Egejuru 102). Characterization in African novels is, therefore, influenced by folklore, a point that has nothing to do with their effectiveness as characters. It depends on the type of story in which they are incorporated, and also from the African perspective from which they are viewed. They may not be "round" characters in the Western sense, but they have a depth of their own. Commenting on the point of rounded characters Achebe states:

> When they talk of rounded characters, they mean... interior

> monologue. We have been living a perfectly happy life in Africa without looking at things from that angle. We were able to explain what happened to people for instance, "that's how his 'chi' wants it", doesn't involve Freud, but it says something important.... So you shift it from the individual to something beyond him, ... a bargain that was struck with his 'chi'. This is a metaphorical way of looking at things.... Our civilization and culture are bedded in symbols; once they move into something difficult, they shift from literal explanation to symbolic explanation, especially when they are dealing with deeper truths (qtd. in Egejuru 107 - 108).

This is the kind of understanding one should bring to the interpretation of folklore in African literature.

The folkloric elements are incorporated in Laye's novel, Dramouss, to represent the African point of view, and to portray characters, events, and ideas through folkloric symbolism that is capable of explaining the deeper truths of the issues with which the novel is dealing. This is why Laye utilizes a folktale in Dramouss to explain through his persona, Fatoman, jealousy and its consequences, for this is one of those instances when "symbolic explanation" offers a better clarification of the difficult notion of jealousy than "literal explanation". Whereas, to a modern European reader a tale in the middle of the novel, as King points out, is unexpected; to an African audience the tale is just in its appropriate place in the novel, because we understand its parabolic function.

In addition, King recognizes the fact that Dramouss, unlike L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi which were targeted for a European audience, is directed to an African audience. In any case, as Egbuna points out, "The European readership of African fiction is more imagined than real" (159). The African audience which forms the majority of the readers of African novels can, therefore, understand the purpose of this tale in the middle of Dramouss, and with a little clarification the foreign audience should also be able to appreciate its use in the context of this novel.

Once more this usage has to do with the social function of African tales. "The African tale," as Mzamane points out, "dealt with a vast range of subjects so that whenever a child wanted an explanation about anything an appropriate tale would be found to illustrate it." (149). The folktale in Dramouss is utilized in this didactic manner, as an illustration of jealousy. Contrary to what King, in agreement with Mohamadou Kane, says about the unconnectedness of the tale to the action of the novel, the tale is ingeniously woven into the fabric of the novel's text, and actually enhances its plot. We are first introduced to its idea in the opening chapter of the novel in the episode in which Fatoman, the main protagonist, promises Mimie that when they reach his home in Kouroussa he will ask the griot to narrate for her a tale that will explain why jealousy does not pay. The theme of jealousy rises out of a discussion Fatoman and Mimie have about the belief that husbands who love their wives must show jealousy for their wives. Fatoman disagrees with this notion, and to explain his opposition to this idea he offers the griot's tale as the best explanation of jealousy. The following conversation clearly illustrates how Laye introduces the whole idea of the tale, long before it is told, in order to make it part of his narrative:

> - Es tu satisfait, Fatoman? demanda Mimie.
>
> - Oui, très satisfait. Et toi?
>
> - Je suis la plus heureuse de toutes les femmes du monde. Me permets-tu, mon cher époux, dit-elle, le visage rayonnant, d'aller annoncer la bonne nouvelle à une amie?
>
> - Comment? Tu sortirais cette nuit?
>
> - Ah, tu es jaloux, hein? fit-elle.
>
> - Non, ce n'est pas la question!
>
> - On m'a cependant appris qu'un homme qui n'est pas jaloux n'aime pas sa femme.
>
> - Qui t'a dit cela?
>
> - Une camarade, repondit-elle en riant.
>
> - On peut aimer et ne pas manifester de jalousie....
>
> - Alors, dis-moi pourquoi tu n'es pas jaloux, toi? insista-t-elle.
>
> - Je suis de ceux qui font facilement confiance à autrui, étant passablement sérieux, je te fais confiance, tandis qu'un ancien coureur de jupons ne peut se fier à sa femme.... Et puis non, ce serait trop long à t'expliquer!
>
> - Mais si, explique-toi! Je t'écoute, dit-elle, très excitée.

> - Non, Mimie, ce serait trop long. Mais si tel est ton désir, à notre arrivée à Kouroussa je demanderai au griot Kessery de te raconter les aventures d'un homme jaloux, et tu verras qu'elles sont peu engageantes (Dramouss 34-35).

Any attentive reader would, like Mimie, be anxiously waiting to listen to this story (or read it), since the narrator has already prepared us for it. The tale, after all, is told for Mimie's benefit, for she would like to know what happened to the jealous husband in the traditional tale. The tale is utilized as a paradigm to the theme of jealousy in the novel. Jealousy permeates the whole novel. There is, for instance, jealousy between Mimie and Françoise, Dramouss's jealousy directed against the relationship between Fatoman and Mimie, and symbolically the jealousy between Guinea and France over Fatoman's relationship with both countries. The tale is, therefore, a commentary on Fatoman's life which the tale parallels. For instance, Mimie, being newly married to Fatoman, is particularly interested in the tale about jealous husbands because she would like to know whether her husband loves her as the African truism states. According to Mimie, a husband who loves his wife must be jealous of her. Consequently, she becomes completely absorbed in the narration and keeps interrupting to ask questions. Similarly, Fatoman is interested in the tale because he is worried about Mimie's jealousy in regard to his relationship with Françoise; he hopes that by listening to this tale Mimie would get rid of this jealousy. In addition, Fatoman would like to utilize the tale as a means of divesting himself of his feeling for Françoise and, by extension, for France which Françoise symbolizes. Mimie symbolizes Guinea. Fatoman loves both Françoise and Mimie, but as Françoise correctly suggests to him, he cannot love two girls at the same time, he must choose between them. By choosing to marry Mimie and not Françoise, Fatoman chooses Guinea over France. Having made this choice, he returns to Guinea with the hope that he will find some of the traditional values he left behind. This is why he insists on explaining issues through folklore rather than through some philosophical arguments he might have learned in France.

The folktale is told in a traditional manner by a traditional griot, and the conventions of African storytelling are adhered to by situating the story in the right context of the family's evening story telling session. The time, place, and company is correct as defined by Ben Amos in his delineation of folklore. Laye recreates for us the real situation that demonstrates "folklore as communication in small groups" (Ben Amos 10). The griot begins his narration by singing praise songs of the participants in the storytelling session which are reminiscent of the genealogies that were recited in L'Enfant noir. But this glorious recitation is interrupted by Mimie who is anxious to listen to the tale of the jealous husband. The griot, whom, incidentally, Kirkup mistranslates as witchdoctor, stops the recitation of panegyric songs and begins his tale of the pious Imam Moussa and his beautiful wife Habibatou. To understand this tale we must keep in mind the moral of the tale which is, jealousy does not pay. Imam Moussa, though a pious man of God, thought that he could, through riches and piety, confine his wife to the house and keep her only to himself. But, despite his restrictions and his wealth, his wife left him for the poor beggar. Being a tale, it does not give detailed reasons why Habibatou chose the beggar over the rich Imam. But, symbolically, the story illustrates jealousy and its consequences.

If we could draw a correspondence between the tale and Fatoman's life, we would postulate that the ugly beggar symbolizes Guinea's poverty and wretchedness, as well as cruelty, as illustrated by the political brutalities, but Fatoman, like Habibatou, chooses to love Guinea with all its poverty and wretchedness and rejects France, which Imam Moussa represents, in the tale, despite its riches and beauty. For this reason, France, like Imam Moussa, repudiates Guinea and its peoples, whom Fatoman represents, as evidenced by the historical facts. My interpretation would, therefore, vary slightly from King's explanation, especially in the reasons she gives, because I would not regard the colonial period as "a peaceful era" in Guinea for, if it was, there would have been no reason to revolt against it. Gleason, in her book This Africa, clearly indicates that the colonization of Guinea was no different from the colonization of other African states where the colonial powers used forced labour and imposed forced taxes on the populace. The assimilation into French culture was also open only to the chosen few, a policy that led to a very small African elite and a majority which was given neither the opportunity nor the means of improving their social condition.

I do not intend to discuss colonialism in detail here because it is an issue that is very well documented. Nevertheless, the tale can be interpreted in several ways. At its simplest level, the tale illustrates the fact that jealousy does not pay, and, for that reason, Fatoman will not indulge in it. At another level, it is a commentary on the wiles of women, but instead of Laye ending it at the point when Imam Moussa's wife is repudiated, which would give a lopsided view of human foibles, Laye extends the narrative to the point at which it demonstrates the fact that both men and women have moral weaknesses. The righteous Imam Moussa, like his unfaithful wife Habibatou, also succumbs to human weakness and commits adultery with the queen, whose son he had gone to heal. The saying that was earlier applied to Imam's wife, equally applies to Imam Moussa himself: "en chaque femme [et l'homme] sur la terre, il y a un ange et un demon." (Dramouss 138). Unlike most oral tales which usually stereotype women as the sources of evil, Laye twists his tale to portray the weaknesses of both sexes. In this regard, he is like Ngugi who depicts characters, in his early novels, as neither totally good nor totally evil.

The tale also comments on the relationship between Fatoman, Mimie, and Françoise and the jealousy it arouses, as well as the jealousy of the supernatural serpent-woman, Dramouss. Her jealousy could be differentiated from that of Mimie and Françoise because she belongs to a different mode of existence. For that reason, her jealousy is similar to the one attributed to God in the Old Testament in which God is said to be a jealous God. The tale also illustrates the jealousy between France and Guinea, both of which Fatoman loves, but as Fatoman clearly indicates, Guinea, like Mimie, is his first love. Fatoman and Mimie are also able, within the construct of the tale, to discuss jealousy more freely than they were able to do at the beginning of the novel. In the process of resolving the conflicts in the tale, their own conflicts are resolved. At the end of the tale, both the reader and the characters in the novel are edified. "The internal characteristics of literature reflect social and ethical implications through a system of genetically based correspondences, so that to describe one is to describe the other" (Hirch 43).

By incorporating a complete folktale in his text, Laye fulfils the function of preserving the tale in written form for posterity. Like Ngugi, Laye believed that it is on our oral tradition that the foundation of our future society can be established. Through this tale Laye also demonstrates the technique of traditional story telling, for in this story we have a glimpse of the stylistic features of folklore: opening and closing formulas, repetition, audience participation, drama, and the moral lesson. The tale begins with an opening formula: "Moussa! Moussa! Moussa!" Then the griot introduces the main character: "Moussa, l'homme jaloux, a beaucoup souffert de sa jalousie" (128). In the course of narration Mimie keeps interrupting the griot in order to find out what happened to the jealous husband. We have the structure of the twice told tale, for the griot elongates his tale in order to illustrate that both Imam Moussa and his wife were similarly unfaithful.

The dream is the other folkloric element that Laye employs to convey his political message. "Symbolic dream or vision has always played a crucial role" in Laye's literary works (Moore 99), as evidenced by L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du *roi* in which dreams are used to reveal certain truths to the key characters in the novels. In *Dramouss*, Fatoman is given a magic white ball, covered with cowrie shells, to put under his pillow in order to help him to foresee the future of Africa. In the dream, he sees the future predicament of his country in two phases: one a tyrannical phase in which the Guinean citizens suffer under a cruel leader known as the "Big Brute", and second a peaceful phase in which Guinea is led by a heroic leader symbolized by the "Black Lion."

The symbol of this tyrannical phase of oppression is a vast circular prison, with very high walls, in which the prisoners are tortured and then brutally killed by the sadistic, giant prison guard. His gigantic figure is reminiscent of the ogres of the African folk tales. Fatoman, the dreamer, is thrust in the midst of this hideous prison, and unlike the other prisoners, who accept their fate without question, Fatoman asks questions incessantly in an attempt to argue the sadistic prison guard out of the atrocities he is inflicting upon the inmates. The cries the dreamer hears at night recall the screams that Clarence of *Le Regard du roi* heard on the esplanade, and like Clarence, the dreamer cannot confirm the moanful cries in the prison. Each time he attempts to ascertain the killings he finds no concrete proof of the corpses. This is partly because it is a dream and some of the events he is dreaming about have not yet occurred. Fatoman's attempt to persuade the prison guard to refrain from killing any more prisoners only triggers ridicule from the guard, because he regards Fatoman as naive and his suggestions too idealistic in the world in which Fatoman is operating. For all his humanitarianism, Fatoman lands himself a death sentence, and the method of his execution is by fire. While the prison guard and his henchmen are preparing to burn Fatoman at the stake, Fatoman, the dreamer, suddenly finds himself ascending like the smoke of a burnt offering.

In a series of transformations, characteristic of characters in folkloric tales, the dreamer is transformed into a little bird, then a hawk, and soars high above the scene of his death. But before he completely escapes from danger, the jailor similarly transforms himself into a bigger hawk and pursues the dreamer in an attempt to recapture him. We are now plunged into the world of "fairy" tales in which a villain, in pursuit of his victim, transforms himself into stronger forms to recapture his victim. In Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, this type of function of the dramatic personae is classified under category twenty one (xxi) titled "The hero is pursued and given the definition of 'pursuit' or 'chase'" (56). The particular case in which the jailor, who is the villain, undergoes transformation to pursue his victim, Propp classifies further under sub-category three, and states: "He [the pursuer] pursues the hero, rapidly transforming himself into various animals, etc. (PR 3). This form at several stages is also connected with flight: a magician pursues the hero in the forms of a wolf ... and a rooster" (56). The villain, the jailor, almost succeeds in recapturing Fatoman, but just before he gets into the prison walls a black serpent comes and rescues him, and shoots off rocket-like into the sky. Dramouss corresponds to the Proppian "magical agents" who usually, "without any warning, suddenly appear or are met on the way and offer their services and are accepted as helpers. Most often [they have] extraordinary attributes" (45-47), like Dramouss. This serpent-woman Dramouss plays the same role as the little black snake in L'Enfant noir, who is the blacksmith's guardian spirit, and, also, like the snakes in Dioki's cavern in Le Regard du roi, both of which "symbolize the prophetic and protective wisdom of the ancestors" (Moore 101). Fatoman is rescued because he believes in Man and also has faith in his traditional African civilization in which he was reared. The black serpent, carrying Fatoman, begins to descend as rapidly as she had ascended. When they reach the ground the serpent changes into a beautiful woman, Dramouss.

On the land, Fatoman, the dreamer, recognizes the village of Samakoro, but to his surprise it is desolate. Wandering through this desolate village, he comes to a large Kailcedrat tree under which he finds several corpses. Dramouss asks him to bring one more corpse, but when Fatoman goes to pick it up, it seems to be the body of a sleeping person, and, for that reason, he refuses to bring it along. But Dramouss insists that he brings the corpse, and, therefore, Fatoman obeys and goes back for the extra corpse. When he attempts to carry the corpse, it suddenly vanishes, in a flash, and Fatoman is left wondering whether that was his body and if that is the case, then he might have just witnessed his own death and resurrection, an experience that symbolizes death and rebirth similar to the process he went through during his initiation ceremony in L'Enfant noir.

But Fatoman's nightmare is not over yet; because, while he is still pondering on the strange phenomenon of his death and resurrection, a flood of icy water covers the land, and the dreamer is forced to climb to the highest branches of the tree. Dramouss again rescues him and takes him into the sky, utilizing the moon as the vehicle of transportation. While they are up there in the cosmos, Dramouss reveals to Fatoman the spiritual condition of the human race which is written on a huge slate thus:

> SUR LA TERRE, L'HOMME NE FAIT RIEN POUR PERSONNE, NI RIEN CONTRE PERSONNE; IL FAIT TOUT POUR LUI-MËME ET TOUT CONTRE LUI-MËME. (Dramouss 227).

Dramouss continues to interpret the dream to Fatoman. She explains that the flood symbolizes the revolution which has swallowed up everything except the gun, the hoe, and the assegai which she managed to rescue and to entrust to the Black Lion, who symbolizes the future leader of Guinea. For the dreamer she has a golden rod, a symbol of authority, which turns out to be a propelling pencil, the artist's tool. Fatoman is then carried away from the flood by the moon in which he finds the Black Lion. The Black Lion then guides the moon towards the sun, the source of life. The moon suddenly becomes part of the new "redeemed, resurgent illuminated world of Africa" (Moore 102). The dreamer is finally back onto familiar ground, he can recognize the girls, women, and old men from his village. Through the dream Fatoman is able to see the future Guinea guided by the wisdom of "the heroic and sage Black Lion."

According to Moore, it is the dream that gives the novel its complexity.

Moore, incidentally, totally ignores the tale, which undoubtedly adds beauty to a narrative that is otherwise simple and matter of fact. Unlike Moore who interprets the source of light as being the fire in the hut, I would contend that the light in the dream has nothing to do with the fire that has gutted Fatoman's hut, for Fatoman, the dreamer, is totally unaware of the literal fire. In the context of the dream, the source of light is the sun which in most African religions is looked upon as the giver of life to all living things. The sun plays a central role in traditional African religions because every morning the head of the family wakes up, faces the rising sun, says his prayers, and asks the sun to shower blessings on his family. To Moore, the sun is "the rekindling of life", and the moon not only bears the souls of the dead, but, in African mythology, it represents the night, a time when all evil is at large. Ascending towards the sun, the dreamer renews his strength and also gets sanctified from all evil, and, finally, descending brings new life and a better future to his country, and, by implication, Africa as a whole. Through this dream Fatoman almost has a literal baptism of fire which, symbolically, purges him and his country from the evils of the past. Fatoman is finally rescued from the fire by the communal effort of his village community. Their fight against the fire symbolizes their struggle against evil forces. The dream is a prophetic projection of a future Africa that will be led by a powerful leader who will be capable of eliminating all forms of evil.

Fire also plays a similar symbolic role of purging the characters and, by extension, the country from the evils of the past in Ngugi's Petals of Blood. While the three corrupt business men, Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria are destroyed by fire, Wanja, who represents the people, survives. Similarly, in Dramouss, Fatoman is rescued from the prison and the fire, because of his love for justice and the people. Laye utilizes the dream to present the future of his country, Guinea, and, by implication, the African continent. Although Africa is in turmoil right now, there is still hope for a better future. While Laye perceives this better future as being brought about by a heroic leader, similar to the Sundiata of the ancient Mali empire, Ngugi, on the contrary, believes that this better future will be brought about through the people's revolution. In this regard, Laye's vision is closer to Ngugi's earlier position expressed in his early novels in which he believed in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro and the leadership of heroic figures like Harry Thuku and Kenyatta. In this sense, Laye is not as revolutionary as Ngugi, whose faith in change has been strengthened by a Marxist ideology. In Ngugi's early works the dream plays a similar role to the one it plays in Dramouss. The prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, for instance, is revealed to Mugo through a dream and like Fatoman's dream, the prophecy reveals the future events in Kenya. Unlike Laye who centres the action of the narrative on the dream and the dreamer and plunges it in the surreal world of magical transformations, Ngugi utilizes Mugo's prophecy to direct and explain the actions of his characters in realistic historical contexts. Waiyaki's dream in The River Between also resembles Fatoman's dream to a certain extent, because in it water symbolizes death in the same way it does in Dramouss. Water, as a symbol of death, also appears in

Laye's short story "Les Yeux de la Statute". But unlike Fatoman, the woman in the short story is not rescued, probably, because she symbolizes the African continent which is not spared by the destructive forces.

The sexual connotation in Dramouss is remote. It is brought in to explain how Fatoman's hut was set on fire. According to Fatoman's father, the fire was set by Dramouss, because she was jealous of Fatoman's relationship with Mimie. But the kind of jealousy Dramouss has is religious rather than human. By sleeping with his wife, Mimie, Fatoman had, as it were, committed sacrilege, because his acceptance to utilize the magic ball in order to see the future was, in actual fact, an acceptance to participate in a religious ritual. One was supposed to abstain from sexual intercourse before taking part in a religious ritual as Laye indicates in L'Enfant noir. In Dramouss, Fatoman seems to be ignorant about this important code of conduct, a factor that his mother attributes to his age. Fatoman should not have performed this ritual before he turned forty.

Moore also delineates the similarity between the serpent woman, Dramouss, the large Kailcedrat tree, and the biblical story of the woman, the serpent and the tree of life, in Genesis. But we should emphasize quite strongly that, unlike the biblical story in which the serpent is a tempter, the serpent in Dramouss is integrated into the female symbol and acts like a guardian angel who protects Fatoman from death, because he has a task to perform in the future of his country. Similarly, Gimbutas, in The Language of the Goddess, refers to the persistence of snake worship in Europe. She states that the snakes "were guardians of the home; they were clairvoyant, knowing the future of family members and the location of hidden treasures. To this day, snakes decorate the corners, windows, and roof of a Baltic farmhouse" (134).

In addition, the dream reflects Laye's escape from Guinea into exile. According to King, the hawk that flies to retard Fatoman's flight symbolizes Sékou Touré's hawk that he released during Guinea's independence which, at that time, was a symbol of liberty, but, later, was transformed into a symbol of oppression. It was now turned into a bird of prey that devoured the helpless "chicks." This symbol of destruction was further heightened by Fatoman's father's rescue of the chick from the mouth of a hawk through his incantatory prayer. This is yet another victory for the righteous, and the just. Laye is convinced that eventually evil will be destroyed by the perseverance of those who fight for justice and who trust in God.

There is a marked difference between the way Laye and Ngugi utilize religion in their works. While Laye accepts Islam uncritically and portrays it as an integral part of the Malinké culture, Ngugi criticizes the way Christianity destroyed traditional beliefs and customs in Gikuyu society. In those instances in which he utilizes the Christian religion he modifies and manipulates it to serve his own political purpose. Most of the Biblical symbols are utilized in order to heighten the significance of the Gikuyu struggle for independence. Devout Christians like Joshua and Jacobo are openly criticized, while in Laye's works the pious Moslems, like his father and uncle, are highly acclaimed.

This uncritical acceptance of Islam could be due to the fact that Islam, from the beginning, was integrated into traditional beliefs because "Its proselytizers readily accepted traditional concepts of divination, magic, and the important institution of polygamy" (Hull 135). Most of the "African monarchs", according to Hull, "took what they considered to be the best elements in Islam and merged them into their traditional set of beliefs" (139). This was not the case in the Christianization of Gikuyuland. The Christian missionaries tended to destroy every aspect of traditional beliefs by portraying the African tenets as totally evil and barbaric. This attitude resulted in bitter conflicts between the Christians and non-Christians, as portrayed in Ngugi's early novels. In Laye's works there is, however, a more balanced view between traditional beliefs, the Islamic faith, and the Western culture. Laye believes that:

> Mon être, je m'en rendais compte, était la somme de deux "moi" intimes: le premier, plus proche de mon sens de la vie, façonné par mon existence traditionnelle d'animiste faiblement teinté d'islamisme, enrichi par la culture française, combattait le second, personnage qui, par amour pour la terre natale, allait trahir sa pensée, en revenant vivre au sein de ce régime (Dramouss 187).

Despite the political turmoil in his country, Laye's African self and his patriotism pulled him back to Guinea. He only left, eventually, because of the threat to his life, for he was briefly imprisoned in Guinea, an experience he shares with Ngugi who was imprisoned for one year in Kenya. As a political novel, Dramouss was intended as an indictment of Sékou Touré's regime in Guinea.

It is interesting to note that Moore recommends Dramouss as a novel worthy of our attention on the account of this dream episode alone. The incoherent structure which most critics perceive as contributing to the novel's structural weakness, Moore sees as expressing Laye's divided self (102), and the dream motif as being consistent with Laye's visionary style of writing and also with Malinké tradition.

In Dramouss, Laye continues with the same purpose of preserving the timeless values of his culture that he began with in L'Enfant noir. He takes every opportunity to emphasise the values of his culture despite the drastic changes that have occurred in his society since he left for France. For instance, instead of explaining the consequences of jealousy through some philosophical ideas he might have gathered through his foreign education, he utilizes a traditional tale to explain it. This factor demonstrates his faith in traditional African culture and its capability of playing a role in modern African society. The incorporation of the tale into his novel also illustrates the fact that Laye wanted to tell his story in an African manner, utilizing the methods of the traditional African griot. The use of folklore also projects an African world whose meaningful communication is usually conveyed through folklore.

In Dramouss, Laye also continues to lament about the loss of African traditional culture as he did in L'Enfant noir. For instance, he takes time to indulge the reader with detailed explanations of the value and significance of traditional art. He appropriately selects Fatoman's father to explain this traditional art which he admits no longer exists because:

> Ces formes datent d'une époque lointaine, du temps de nos pères. C'était un temps où la biche qui surgissait sous l'herminette servait au culte, à la magie. Un temps où le forgeron-sculpteur était sorcier, était prêtre, et où il exerçait plus qu'une pure activité artisanale, par le fait d'un art qui était constamment en relation avec le feu, pour la fusion du minerai, d'abord, pour le travail du métal, ensuite. L'arme qui sortait de ses mains était une arme qui blessait non pas seulement parce qu'elle est tranchante et bien maniée, mais parce que le pouvoir lui avait été accordé de blesser et de trancher. La houe du paysan n'était pas seulement l'outil qui remuait la terre, mais le talisman qui commandait à la terre et à la moisson. En ce temps, l'art du forgeron passait de loin les autres, était très réellement un art noble, un art de magicien, un art en vérité, qui requérait plus de connaissance et plus d'habileté que les autres arts (Dramouss 165-166).

Like the traditional griot, Laye utilizes his story to teach a lesson on the significance of traditional African society. If we keep in mind the fact that art in African society was utilitarian and that Laye was writing his novel from this functional point of view, we would be able to appreciate Dramouss better than most critics have done so far. The misinterpretation has often arisen from the misconception that African writers are trying to emulate Western type of novels.

Furthermore, when we accept the fact that African folklore is the main influence on African authors, like Laye, then our interpretation will be on the right track. The significance of the influence of folklore on Laye's creative works is finally demonstrated by his work Le Maitre de la parole which we shall discuss later in this study.

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CHAPTER FIVE

NGUGI'S POLITICAL NOVELS: PETALS OF BLOOD AND DEVIL ON THE CROSS

Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross, like Camara Laye's Dramouss, are political novels. Petals of Blood was published in 1977, ten years after A Grain of Wheat. But in between A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ co-authored The Trial of Dedan Kimathi with Micere Mugo. After the publication of Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ wrote another play , Ngaahika Ndeenda, in collaboration with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ. By the time Ngũgĩ began to write Devil on the Cross he was in detention probably because of writing and staging Ngaahika Ndeenda. Devil on the Cross, unlike Petals of Blood, was written in Gĩkũyũ and published under the title Caitaani Mũtharaba-inĩ in 1980. Writing in Gĩkũyũ was, for Ngũgĩ, part of his new commitment and a continuation of his anti-colonial struggle as well as "a means of [his] defiance of the intended detention of [his] mind and imagination" (Decolonising 71). Ogunjimi suggests that Devil on the Cross "is a practical culmination [of a debate] ... of linguistic colonization and the need to write in national languages" (57). In addition, Ngũgĩ wrote Devil on the Cross in Gĩkũyũ to communicate directly to the Agĩkũyũ peasants and workers who were his new audience. In this regard, Ngũgĩ seems to have achieved his objective because Devil on the Cross, unlike Petals of Blood, was not only read individually by literate Agikuyu, but was also read in families and by "workers [who] would ... gather in groups ... and ... get one of them to read the book. It was read in buses; it was read in taxis; it was read in public bars" (Decolonising 33). This enthusiastic reception of Devil on the Cross supports Ngũgĩ's notion that once the language and the content was right, the novel would be able to reach the audience for whom it was intended, their illiteracy notwithstanding.

Unlike Laye's Dramouss, which was almost dismissed because of its sententiousness, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross still attract a great deal of attention despite their didacticism. According to Crehan's observations, "Critics have on the whole been fairly kind to Petals of Blood" (1). Although most critics disparage Petals of Blood for its "polemical directness" (Robson 95), they recognize its complex structure which is shaped by way of "carefully delayed revelations, the complex shifts in time, the subtle use of several viewpoints, the interweaving not only of different stories but of different narrative levels" (Pagnoulle 202). Cook and Okenimkpe, for instance, praise Ngũgĩ's "bold and powerful attempt to combine the intimacy of the traditional novel with a public rhetorical manner in a new ... revolutionary amalgam" (123). On the contrary, Nkosi regards Petals of Blood as a failure:

> because [Ngũgĩ] ... gives up concrete observation which is the correct starting point of all pure materialists, in favour of a fable-cum-satire-cum-realist fiction in order to illustrate class formations in modern Kenya (72).

Similarly, Nazareth, one of the most prominent critics of Ngũgĩ's literary works, laments the fact that Ngũgĩ incorporates too much information in this novel. "Why", he asks, "was it necessary to put in absolutely everything, as though nobody reading his novel would have read anything else containing the truth, not even his Homecoming?" (125). We could state that Ngũgĩ incorporated everything in Petals of Blood because he wanted "to expose vividly, powerfully and memorably the client nature of the post-colonial state in Africa [and] to depict the African peasantry and the rest of the working masses of the continent" (Kamenju 133). To depict African peasants and workers effectively, Ngũgĩ was convinced that it was only by utilizing the folklore of the Kenyan masses that he could "rise to the great challenge of recreating, in [his] poems, plays and novels, the epic grandeur of [their] history" (Detained 196). A full appreciation of Petals of Blood can only be achieved by taking into consideration the folkloric elements in the novel. We shall interpret the folkloric elements in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross from an Afrocentric point of view which emphasizes the functional aspect of literature and its inseparability from life, a view that comes close to the performative function of literature in Ricoeur's theory of language as discourse.

To fully understand the use of folklore in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross we must take into consideration Ngũgĩ's overall purpose for writing, and how he utilizes the folkloric elements to enhance that purpose. Ngũgĩ has often stated that:

> a writer reflects reality and also attempts to persuade us to take a certain attitude to that reality. The persuasion can be a direct appeal

> on behalf of the writer's open doctrine or it can be an indirect appeal [to influence the reader] ... in a certain way, toward certain goals and a set of values, consciously or unconsciously held by him (Writers in Politics 7).

Furthermore, by the time Ngũgĩ wrote Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross Ngũgĩ's sentiments had changed from those of "a Christian humanist" of the early novels, to those of "a militant socialist". According to Gitahi-Gititi, Ngũgĩ's concerns shifted from the problems of colonialism to the demands of socialist realism which insist that "literature should reveal contradiction inherent in society and that literature should show how best these contradictions can be solved to create a better social order" (Gitahi-Gititi 3).

In Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ delineates both the contradictions that were introduced into the Kenyan society by colonialism and its successor neo-colonialism and goes ahead to offer solutions to the problems. In the novel, Ngũgĩ "exposes and excoriates petty bourgeois commercialism, stage-managed tribalism, the hypocrisy and callousness of the institutionalized church, as well as the barbarous economic plunder of the majority of Kenyans by a minority who form a small, privileged upper crust" (Gitahi-Gititi 5 -6). Similarly, Devil on the Cross attacks neo-colonialism and imperialism and their "functionaries for their obsessive preoccupation with money, power and conspicuous consumption" (Gitahi-Gititi 5). This similarity of theme between Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross is also supported by Killam when he writes: "The thematic material of [Devil on the

Cross] is the same as Petals of Blood and I Will Marry When I Want - the overall effect of exploitation and the collusion of a class of Kenyan[s] in defiling the lives of their countrymen" (138). Ngũgĩ's thematic concerns are indicative of his Marxist leanings. However, a number of critics point out that Ngũgĩ's Marxism deviates from the orthodox Marxism of Marx and Engels and Lenin and follows Fanon's brand of Marxism. Fanon differentiates "between Western bourgeoisie and colonial bourgeoisie" (Sharma 24). The Western bourgeoisie developed from within its own society, but the African bourgeoisie was imposed on the colonised people. For that reason, the African bourgeoisie cannot play a central role in the revolutionary process of African countries because it belongs to a "dependent class, a parasitic class in the Kupe [tick] sense ... in essence a mnyapala [overseer] class, a handsomely paid supervisor for the smooth operation of foreign economic interests" (Ngũgĩ Detained 56). Although these characteristics of the "comprador bourgeoisie" are portrayed in Petals of Blood, it is in Devil on the Cross that Ngũgĩ fully dramatizes the role of the petty bourgeoisie in Kenya, utilizing both folkloric and Biblical elements. Commenting on the structure of Devil on the Cross Ngũgĩ writes:

> I ... borrowed heavily from forms of oral narrative, particularly the conversational tone, the fable, proverbs, songs, and the whole tradition of poetic self-praise or praise of others. I also incorporated a Biblical element - the parable - because many literates would have read the Bible (Decolonising 77-78).

Since Ngũgĩ's approach in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross is more militant than it was in his early novels, Ngũgĩ utilizes the folkloric genres of fable, parable, song, and proverb whose messages are more direct than the myths and legends he employed in The River Between, Weep Not, Child, and A Grain of Wheat to "articulate the feelings behind the struggle" (Ngũgĩ 50). According to Gitahi-Gititi, "Ngũgĩ's extensive use of legends, proverbs, sayings and other aspects of the oral tradition, especially song, verse and dance, is, ... an attempt to counter the devaluation of a people's culture and history that colonialism and neo-colonialism have always sought to perpetrate" (26). Whereas, "socially and politically [Ngũgĩ] was moving in a more radical and revolutionary direction, morally and culturally he was moving in the direction of a more pronounced traditionalism" (Sharma 22).

Like Ngũgĩ's first three novels, Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross allude to the pre-colonial, colonial, and neo-colonial history of Kenya. To adequately comprehend the use of folklore in these two works, an understanding of Kenya's history is required. From Ngũgĩ's point of view, the only true history of Kenya is the revolutionary history of Kenyan peasants and workers and it can only be effectively reflected through elements of folklore. Biblical mythologies and symbols are utilized also because they have almost become an integral part of Agĩkũyũ oral tradition. For instance, in Petals of Blood Karega quotes from memory the parable of "five loaves and two fishes" as a rebuke to Rev. Jerod Brown, alias Kamau, for offering the people of Ilmorog the abstract spiritual bread when they needed solid food. Similarly, Wangari in Devil on the Cross recounts the parable of the talents as though she was reading directly from the Bible.

Thematically, Petals of Blood deals with the mystery surrounding the burning of three prominent Kenyan businessmen, Chui, Kimeria, and Mzigo. The novel opens with the investigation of their deaths and for a while it almost seems as if it will be one of those whodunit detective stories. However, the main narrative is not interested in finding out who murdered these businessmen but, rather, in explaining why they were justifiably murdered. The narrative "explores the causes of the tensions between the peasants and workers of Ilmorog on the one hand and political hegemony on the other" (Amuka 166). Ilmorog (the Maasai term for Limuru) is a microcosm of Kenya, and the experiences of peasants and workers in Ilmorog is supposed to reflect the experiences of all peasants and workers in Kenya. The main characters through whom the story is told are Abdalla, Wanja, Munira, and Karega who, according to Crehan, are "mysteriously brought together, [and] drawn towards a spiritual goodness they can feel but do not understand, [and who] are then made to see into Kenya's past, and the meaning of their individual pasts, in a series of induced confessions and verbal memoirs " (3).

Structurally, Petals of Blood is narrated through "intradiegetic narrators" and, for that reason, "story and narration become closely intertwined" (Crehan 3). In structuring Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ admits that he was influenced by the novelistic techniques of Conrad, George Lamming, and some of the other great novelists such as Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Gorky, Sholokov, Balzac, and

Faulkner. In addition, Ngũgĩ's "observation of how people ordinarily narrated events to one another had also shown [him] that they quite happily accepted interventions, digressions, narrative within a narrative and dramatic illustrations without losing the main narrative thread. The story within-a-story was part and parcel of the conversational norms of the peasantry" (76). Moreover, like the traditional griot, Ngũgĩ's authorial voice intrudes in the narrative text, and makes direct political statements and commentaries, and in so doing "he breaks away from the traditional European novel form" (Amuka 162). Most critics consider Petals of Blood to be an epic novel. In this regard, it resembles an oral epic in its expansiveness, its incorporation of themes that surpass the dimensions of realism, its inclusion of history, its digressions, its central theme, and its heroes and heroines. Like an oral epic it also incorporates other genres such tales, songs, and proverbs. The oral epic, for instance, is "sung, episode by episode; then the episode is narrated and dramatically acted out ... it fuses together practically all genres known in a particular culture" (Biebuyck 1972; 273). Ngũgĩ does not only incorporate all genres known in his culture but he also narrates the events in a repetitious manner, similar to that of an oral artist. In addition, Ngũgĩ in Detained defines the production of a novel in similar terms that delineate an oral composition, when he states:

> Contrary to popular mythology a novel is not a product of the imaginative feats of a single individual but the work of many hands and tongues. A writer just takes down notes dictated to him by life

> among the people, which he then arranges in this or that form ... in writing a novel, I love to hear the voices of the people working on the land, telling anecdotes in crowded matatus and buses, gyrating their hips in a crowded bar before a juke-box ... people playing the game of love and hate ... in their struggle to live. I need ... to hear the variegated modulations of their voices in different moods" (8-9).

For that reason, in Petals of Blood "different points of view, judgements and final resolutions interact, with the novelist as the bandmaster ensuring the tunes fall into place" (Amuka 164). More specifically, Petals of Blood could be regarded as a musical performance in which solo voices rise, from time to time, to sing their individual pieces and then fall back again into the larger collective chorus. Ngũgĩ, like a traditional griot, is an integral part of this orchestra for he is the one who is performing all these other parts. From a Marxist point of view, the writer is both a product and a producer of his culture. That being the case, he must simultaneously "swim, struggle and also watch on the shore" (Homecoming 39). Richard states that, in Petals of Blood, Ngũgĩ is "the observer, the god who selects and coordinates the elements of the fresco to make it meaningful, he is the mask-carrier in fact"; but at times, he is also "one of the protagonists who steps on the stage to express his own political commitment" (28-29). According to Richard, Petals of Blood "is a perfect illustration of littérature engagée" (29). Furthermore, Ngũgĩ attributes his writing to a collective rather than an individual creation. The content of Devil on the Cross, is said to have come from what his fellow detainees told him while he was in prison.

One of the universal folkloric elements that Ngũgĩ uses in Petals of Blood is the journey motif. It is employed both in a literal and a symbolic sense. At the literal level the people of Ilmorog organize the journey to the city to seek help from their Member of Parliament, Nderi wa Riera, to alleviate the hunger in their village. The journey also "marks a triumph of collective consciousness" (Awuyah 99). Symbolically the journey stands for a quest for political and self knowledge. At the beginning of the journey the people of Ilmorog are portrayed as walking towards their promised land. The title to this section of the novel is symbolically called "walking toward Bethlehem", as an allusion to the idea of salvation suggested by reference to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Similar to Le Regard du Roi in which Laye utilizes the journey as a quest for salvation, Ngũgĩ uses the journey to portray the people of Ilmorog's search for the salvation of their souls. Through the journey Ngũgĩ raises their consciousness about the illusions perpetrated by the Christian church: money and political power. Like Waiyaki's journey to the sacred grove in The River Between, the epic journey in Petals of Blood is an educational process. But unlike Waiyaki's journey, it is a movement towards an "unholy" place, the city which symbolizes exploitation and corruption. In the city the people of Ilmorog encounter hypocritical Christianity, an adulteration of Gĩkũyũ folklore, and an annoying Member of Parliament. In addition, they discover that the people of the city are dominated by "a molten beast of silver and gold". The reference to the molten beast echoes the Biblical story in Exodus in which the people of Israel made a molten calf out of silver and gold and worshipped it.

Furthermore, the journey motif is utilized to delineate character, action, events, and setting. For instance, the journey symbolizes Munira's "ten year inward journey to a position where [he] can now see that man's state is rotten at heart" (Petals 118). This revelation is similar to Fatoman's in Laye's Dramouss in which Fatoman was shown how man's actions are always hurtful to himself and his kind. Similarly, through the characters of Abdalla and Nyakinyua the traditional point of view is conveyed. Nyakinyua is the village griot, par excellence, who portrays the genuine culture of the people of Ilmorog. During the epic journey to the city, Nyakinyua inspires the Ilmorogians with the "legendary and mythical history of Ilmorog" (Awuyah 102). She recounts the past history of Ilmorog from the pre-colonial period to the present. Ilmorog of pre-colonial times is portrayed as an idyllic society which was living in peace and harmony. Through Nyakinyua's story, Ngũgĩ gives a more detailed account of the legendary Gĩkũyũ leader, Ndemi, which was merely alluded to in The River Between and Weep Not, Child. Like most heroic figures of folklore Ndemi's character is larger than life. He is even supposed to have wrestled with God like the Biblical Jacob. Similarly, the description of Ndemi's wives and their commitment to him echo the Biblical story of Ruth and Orpah who left their gods to worship the God of their mother-in-law Hannah. Ndemi's wives are portrayed as saying, "Your gods of the forest will now be our gods and we shall be the mothers of your children" (Petals 121). In the actual textual world, Ndemi's story is narrated for the purposes of encouraging people of Ilmorog to endure their difficult journey and to emulate his courage and bravery. Ngũgĩ utilizes the heroic tale of Ndemi to depict the "epic grandeur" of Gĩkũyũ history. Commenting on the historical perspective of Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ states that he looks at "contemporary society but in a historical perspective. [He] examine[s] the different social forces that are encroaching on the minds and lives of Kenyan people today and also their historical roots" (10).

By failing to take into account the "historical roots" of the legend of Ndemi, Crehan reduces Nyakinyua's narration to "a bare generalized account" (4), and also fails to recognize the fact that Nyakinyua's character is deliberately put on a pedestal to symbolize all that is good and positive in the traditional Gĩkũyũ society. The praise name "mother of men" alludes to the mythical role that women play in the perpetuation of human life. From the African point of view "mother is supreme" as Achebe puts it. In the fictional world of Petals of Blood Nyakinyua's story challenges Karega who, until then, had looked at the world from an abstract perspective as "a series of logical affirmations and refutations, a set of intellectual convictions" (124). To Ngũgĩ, it is not enough to simply intellectualize about people's problems; the intellectuals must actively participate in changing people's lives. Knowledge as well as art must be utilized to solve the practical problems of hunger, drought, and thirst.

By juxtaposing Nyakinyua's narrative, which among other things portrays the traditional process of education, with the presentation of Karega's formal education Ngũgĩ criticises the educational system in Kenya which does not prepare people to cope with their social problems. When Karega begins teaching, he attempts to educate the children through a relevant content that includes song and recitation. However, despite the relevant content of the songs, a more practical solution is required to alleviate hunger and starvation and it is in this context that the idea of the journey is formulated.

Abdalla's character is suddenly transformed in a folkloric manner from "a sour faced cripple with endless curses for Joseph to somebody who laughed and told stories" (Petals 116-117). He becomes a hero who is not only a skilful storyteller, but an expert hunter who is extremely knowledgeable about traditional medicine. Like Chege of The River Between, Abdalla is transfigured in the eyes of his fellow travellers and like the beggar in Laye's Le Regard du roi, he also knows his way in the wilderness. Despite the limp in his leg, his stature is elevated and he is described as having a "glitter in his eyes, and walk[ing] with his chin held high, [his] face fixed on the distant mountains" (136). The tales Abdalla recounts are carefully selected from the traditional repertoire to serve as a commentary on the theme of exploitation. The story of the Ant and Louse, for instance, castigates the competitive individualistic ideology that the comprador bourgeoisie has adopted which develops the few at the expense of the many. In the fable of Chameleon and Hare, Ngũgĩ portrays the allegory of the peasants and workers vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie. Although at the moment the progress of the peasants and workers seems to be slow, it will eventually overtake that of the elite. Similarly, the tales of why the hyena limps, how death came into the world, and the girl who married an ogre, all comment on the exploitative and destructive nature of the bourgeoisie. By alluding to the myth of origin of death which usually explains death as having originated from a perverted message, Ngũgĩ demonstrates how the lives of peasants and workers are destroyed through the mystification of the messages conveyed to them by the ruling class. Because receiving a loan by mortgaging the land is a concept that neither the people of Ilmorog nor Nyakinyua understand, she loses her ancestral land when she follows the advice of the businessmen and takes a loan. The reference to the tale of the woman who married an ogre introduces the ogre motif that runs throughout the novel. This image is finally drawn in bolder strokes in Devil on the Cross. Later, in Petals of Blood Abdalla narrates the fable of the "Hare and Antelope" to underline Nderi's exploitation of the people of Ilmorog. Like Hare in the tale, Nderi wa Riera utilizes the people of Ilmorog to obtain a political position and then forgets all about them. He also sneers at Abdalla by telling him to involve himself in development instead of telling stories. It is somewhat surprising that Crehan in his evaluation of Petals of Blood ignores Ngũgĩ's heroic portrayal of the Mau Mau movement and its exemplary figures like Abdalla and Kimathi and focuses on trivialities. Crehan decides to highlight Wanja's re-organization of Abdalla's shop as an example of "the long-awaited climax of African pride" (8). It is puzzling how Crehan arrives at the conclusion that Abdalla's shop is the climax of African pride. Ngũgĩ includes the Mau Mau story to demonstrate that the Mau Mau style of guerrilla warfare could recur.

In addition to narrating folktales, Abdalla also recounts the story of his life and his participation in the Mau Mau war of independence through a series of reminiscences, triggered by the Christian hymn sung during the march to the city. The events from Abdalla's past are recounted in a manner that recalls Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu. He remembers "other journeys and flights across the plains" (Petals 135), their Mau Mau leader Ole Masai, and the Mau Mau songs. The songs remind him of promises he made when he took the oath of unity and the Batuni oath in response to Kenyatta's call, who promised to hold the "donkey's head" [a metaphor for colonialism] while the masses endured "the kicks" (136). The Batuni oath, according to Maina wa Kinyati, was "The platoon oath given only to those patriots who had been selected by the Mau Mau Central Committee to join the guerilla army" (114). Abdalla recalls how Karega's stories about Africa's freedom fighters such as Chaka, Toussait, Somoei, Nat Turner, Arap Monyei, Laibon Turgut, Dessulines, Mondlane, Owale, Sotune, Kiamba, Nkrumah, and Cabral, told in Abdalla's shop before the journey, added a new dimension to the Mau Mau struggle. Kenyatta and Harry Thuku are excluded from this list because their "apostasies, while intelligible to Ngũgĩ, are not acceptable" (Killam 125). Ngũgĩ highly praises the exemplary Mau Mau leader Kimathi and the Mau Mau struggle, a movement he considers to be the highest peak of Kenya's history of resistance and liberation.

In addition to Abdalla, Wanja narrates the story of her life. Her story shows that through her wits and resourcefulness she survives despite her roles as "a barmaid, helper to her peasant grandmother, prostitute, barmaid-proprietor, and, finally, as a high class call-girl for the pleasure of the three directors of Theng'eta Brewery" (Adagala 18). To the other characters in the novel Wanja is a mystery. According to Karega, she seems to transform herself into different shapes and beings. Like the sorceress of folklore she possesses a magical power that lures the men to her. The three major male characters, Munira, Abdalla, and Karega are captivated by her charms. When she leaves Ilmorog for the first time Munira searches for her everywhere because he cannot do without her. To Abdalla, she is the world and for her sake he is prepared to murder Kimeria. Karega, having had an idyllic love relationship with her, finally rejects her. It is this love relationship that makes Munira so jealous that he dismisses Karega from his teaching job. Yet, ironically, Munira burns down Wanja's brothel to save Karega. Like Abdalla, Wanja's character undergoes several metamorphoses until she finally participates in killing the three prominent businessmen, Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo. Wanja is a type in the Lukacsian sense of the word. As Killam denotes, "[She] represents ... modern Kenyan womanhood ... through her experience of what has happened in the country at every social level, through her knowledge of [various] languages of Kenya - Kikuyu, Luo, Swahili, Kamba, and Luhya" (136). She symbolizes all the Kenyan women who are exploited by neo-colonialism and capitalism. Being a member of the most exploited human species, Wanja also symbolizes the oppressed people of the world.

From a folkloristic point of view, it is the way her life is haunted by fire that is most significant. Wanja had been afraid of fire since the time she witnessed the death of her aunt by fire, and for some unexplained reason Wanja was nearly killed by fire three times. When she was a prostitute in Nairobi a malicious person set her room on fire, an incident that led to her coming to Ilmorog for the first time. While in Ilmorog, Munira set her house on fire, accidentally. Finally, Munira deliberately set Wanja's brothel on fire, an act which killed Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo. Wanja, who symbolizes the exploited masses, escapes and like the legendary phoenix rises up out of the ashes to begin anew. She is the new "mother of men". Within her is the child who represents the hope for a future victory for the people's struggle. To Ngũgĩ, motherhood is a symbol of hope, because the struggle for victory will continue as long as women are giving birth.

Unlike Wanja, Munira's fires were always started by him. Before he came to Ilmorog, Munira had set his father's house on fire for the purposes of cleansing himself from his sexual sin with a prostitute, just as Wanja herself entertained thoughts of setting her body on fire like a Buddhist in order to cleanse herself from her past sins. The last fire that he deliberately sets in Wanja's brothel is to purify Ilmorog from the contamination of sin symbolized by the whorehouse. Wanja and Munira undergo a baptism of fire and this image links their lives. Symbolically, fire stands for both positive and negative forces. In the context of the novel it symbolizes both purification and passion, the fire of love, and the violence of struggle and war. In Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ utilizes fire as a symbol of purification and links it through the image of "Petals of Blood" to the fire of the struggle.

Song is another folkloric element that Ngũgĩ utilizes in Petals of Blood. From the children's songs in Munira's class to Nyakinyua's "opera of eros" during the circumcision ceremony, Ngũgĩ incorporates various songs to heighten the political message of his novel. Even the seemingly nonsensical children's song first rendered in Gĩkũyũ as:

> Mburi ni indo
> Ng'ombe ni indo
> Mbeca ni indo
> Ngai Muheani (20).

which is later translated on page 21, conveys the idea of the significance of wealth and the dignity of labour. The Gĩkũyũ song that the children sung, Kamau wa Njoroge ina ndutu Kuguru, "Kamau son of Njoroge has jiggers in his toes" comments directly on the novel's theme of exploitation. To Ngũgĩ the literal jiggers are more tolerable than the human "jiggers" symbolized by the three murdered businessmen. In contrast to the decadent exploitative culture the elite have adopted, the children's lullabies portray the communal spirit of peasants and workers. While the message of the Christian hymn sung during the journey is depicted as pallid, the Gĩkũyũ songs portray the history and the social life of the people.

The circumcision song which Nyakinyua and Njuguna perform provides one of the best folkloric performances in the novel. Their poetic duet is similar to the Ewe song of abuse, halo. According to Awoonor, the essence of halo is "its agility, exaggeration, and elaborate use of imagery" (86). Nyakinyua's "opera of eros" is also similar to the Gĩcandĩ player's poetry which consists of a series of "enigmas elaborately expressed in good poetry ... the singer ... passes from feasting merriment to the darkest sadness, from comical to tragical and from lyrical to gruesome or even apocalyptical expressions.... [it is] sung ... by singers in a duet" (Pick 149). In the style of a Gĩcandĩ player Nyakinyua and Njuguna take the lead in the "opera of eros". After the introductory remarks of greetings and welcoming speeches the stage is now set for the Gĩkũyũ halo to begin. While the chorus maintains the refrain "I'll pass through Ilmorog - Greeting Mũturi and the young braves" (Petals 207), Nyakinyua and Njuguna indulge in the poetry of abuse and praise. Nyakinyua who was good at singing, throws "erotic abuse, compliments or straight celebratory words with ease" (Petals 207). Njuguna, in the guise of a suitor, wants to see the bride but, when Nyakinyua represents Wanja as the bride, he rejects her saying he cannot accept this beautiful bride "with a broken cunt" (208). Nyakinyua responds to the rejection and abuse of her granddaughter with a stronger invective that challenges Njuguna's virility. But Njuguna is not perturbed by this attack on his virility. He responds "with the prideful authority of a choosy lover" and implies in the response that he can do it but not with this overused cunt that can "hold tobacco wrapped in banana leaves" (208). Nyakinyua, being in control of the situation, takes advantage and derides Njuguna with the abuse: "I was not even giving it to you ... It's only that I found you fucking a crack [in a wall]" (208). This is too humiliating for Njuguna to continue; therefore he changes the subject and moves on to a war song. It should be pointed out that this open reference to sexual intercourse had nothing to do with immorality as Sharma seems to imply. In the context of an initiation ceremony, Nyakinyua's and Njuguna's song had an educational function. But when the same circumcision songs are sung out of context, as the "elite" people of Blue Hills did, then it becomes immoral. Njuguna's war song is utilized to emphasize the fact that the initiation ceremony prepared young people to fight against enemies of the tribe. Similarly the youth of today should fight against the enemies of the nation symbolized by the three rich tycoons Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo. After Njuguna's song, Nyakinyua sings a Getiro song in which she recounts the history of Ilmorog from the present back to the pre-colonial times.

Through this performance of Gĩkũyũ folklore, Ngũgĩ contrasts "the gaiety, spontaneity and dignity of the [circumcision ritual] in which the whole community is involved, ... with the spectacle of the 'traditional' dances put on at Nderi wa Riera's Tourist village" (Gitahi-Gititi 26). The performance also portrays "an image of the organic, happy community that existed [and still exists in certain areas] in Africa ... a community sharing of goods; in which courage, heroism, and self sacrifice were greatly valued and people realized their potential for creative life in games and sports, music, song, and dance, uninhibited by bourgeois morality of European Christianity" (Sharma 29).

Apart from songs, Ngũgĩ incorporates a few proverbs in Petals of Blood, and over one hundred proverbs in Devil on the Cross for structural and thematic purposes. In the traditional African society, proverbs are used "to give universal status to a special and a particular incident and ... to soften the harshness of words and make them more palatable" (Achebe viii). Unlike tales and songs which are performed at particular occasions, proverbs are utilized any time and anywhere in "conversation and oratory to embellish, conceal, or hint" (Finnegan 391), and also to validate a point of view, and to summarize a situation. Ngũgĩ utilizes them to embellish his narrative, give it an authentic African flavour and to comment on the major themes of the novel. In addition, the proverbs in Petals of Blood are used as structural devices to enhance the plot.

The Kiswahili proverb, Mgeni siku mbili ya tatu umpatie njembe, "a visitor is only welcome for two days, on the third give him a hoe!" (177), is employed as a means of creating a rapport in the confrontation between Nderi wa Riera, and the delegation from Ilmorog. In addition, Nderi wa Riera utilizes the proverb "No elephant is ever unable to carry his tusks, however big and weightful" (180), to assure the Ilmorog delegation that he is at their service. Through the proverb: "There is no house with a male child where the head of a he goat shall not be eaten" (180) Njuguna reminds Nderi that it is his responsibility as a son of Ilmorog to help them. To prove his responsibility Nderi decides to address an open air rally at which he employs the Gĩkũyũ proverb Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri "many hands can lift a heavy mortar" (182), to show he is ready to work with them in the spirit of Harambee, the Kenyan motto for unity. In the context of Nderi wa Riera, this expression of unity is both ironic and absurd. Nderi is utilizing it as a mere cliche to boost his self-importance. The crowd quickly recognizes his deception and stone him. The author utilizes the Kiswahili proverb *Baada ya dhiki faraja*, "After hardship comes relief" to embellish his narrative and to comment on the joy the people of Ilmorog had after the drought.

The drought which is a common folkloric motif in Kenyan folktales is one of the key motifs in *Petals of Blood*. It represents both the physical and the spiritual drought. Most of the events in the novel are related to it. For instance, the journey to the city is organized in order to end the hunger and poverty caused by the drought. The drought also symbolizes spiritual drought brought about by neo-colonialism and exploitation of the people through modern technology. Abdalla's donkey was nearly sacrificed because of the drought. But because it was useful the Ilmorogians did not know whether to sacrifice it or to sacrifice a goat. Their dilemma is expressed by the proverb, "The one carried on his mother's stomach and the other carried on his mother's back: how can we choose between them?" (*Petals* 108). The dilemma was solved through the journey to the city which, ironically, brought spiritual drought and poverty. The proverb *Mkono mtupu haulambwi*, (an empty hand is not licked), which comments on the major theme of the novel, illustrates the corrupt administrative system that only hires those with enough money to bribe the employers. Since Karega had no money he could not get a job. In addition, Ngũgĩ utilizes the proverbs "as narrative devices to supplement the conventional ones of the scene and summary" (Haring 98). However, it is in *Devil on the Cross* that Ngũgĩ prominently employs proverbs as building blocks for his narrative.

The other significant folkloric performance takes place during the Theng'eta drinking ceremony. Although Theng'eta is not a folkloric element it is said to aid the Gicandi poets in the composition of their songs. Theng'eta was a plant that grew wild in the bush. It had four tiny red petals, a feature that significantly links it to the title of the novel. The drink made from it was consumed only on special occasions such as circumcision, marriage, or itwika. According to Kenyatta, itwika was a peaceful revolution in which one generation took over the government from the preceding one (309). Symbolically, Theng'eta "is an agent of hallucinatory revelations causing various characters to reveal their inmost thoughts, to confess crimes or explore the meaning of their experiences" (126). It acts like a magical agent which transports the individuals to inner spiritual realms. Furthermore, Theng'eta is:

> a dream. It is a wish. It gives you sight. And for those favoured by God it can make them cross the river of time and talk with their ancestors. It has given seers their tongues; poets and Gicandi players their words and it has made barren women mothers of many children (Petals 210).

Structurally, Ngũgĩ utilizes the Theng'eta ritual to bring his narrative to a climax from which he ties up the final threads of the story. The ritual is employed as a catalyst to trigger the final personal stories of the characters, which provide the last pieces of the huge jigsaw puzzle of Petals of Blood. Nyakinyua conducts the Theng'eta drinking ceremony in the style of a religious ritual. All the partakers of the Gĩkũyũ "holy communion" begin by cleansing themselves from all corrosive items especially money which is "the metal bug that split up homes and drove men to the city" (*Petals* 211). Ngũgĩ's "ideological stance [in *Petals of Blood*] is that the real enemy during Africa's independence struggle was 'monopoly capitalism, whose very condition is cut-throat competition, inequality, and oppression of one group by another'" (Chileshe 134). For this situation to change capitalism must be dismantled completely. This process of dismantling capitalism is symbolized in the Theng'eta ritual by removing all money from the premises of the cleansing ritual. With incantations reminiscent of Laye's father in *L'Enfant noir*, Nyakinyua pours libation to the Gĩkũyũ gods thus:

> Millet power of God
> For those that went before us
> And those coming after us
> tene na tene, tene na tene (211)

"*Tene na tene*" simply means world without end. After this opening formula, Nyakinyua solemnly admonishes the participants to unite as symbolized by drinking from the common measure. Unlike Killam who concludes that what Nyakinyua "stands for and what she lived by are no longer valued or appropriate" (117), I would postulate that Nyakinyua dies after passing her values to the younger generation, as her preamble to the Theng'eta ritual indicates. Unity and solidarity are the values Nyakinyua stands for, values which we cannot afford to discard. Ngũgĩ incorporates these values in Petals of Blood in order to preserve them for posterity. To Ngũgĩ, "a look at yesterday can be meaningful in illuminating today and tomorrow" (Homecoming 46). According to Ngũgĩ, colonialism did not completely eradicate traditional values. They were "kept alive by the peasantry in the forms of their songs, poems, theatre and dances" (Decolonising 170). Munira's dream further underscores the fact that Nyakinyua's values are an integral part of past, present, and future. In the dream Munira is transposed to higher realms through folkloric types of transformations and in this state "he could see clearly to the smallest detail [that] ... The old woman, strong sinews forged by earth and sun and rain was the link binding past, present, and future (212). Like Fatoman's dream in Laye's Dramouss, Munira's dream also emphasizes the Afrocentric conception of time which is "cyclical, mythical, and synchronic" (Anozie 69). The cyclical perception of time is also reflected by the major oral genres of folklore which "resolve themselves into models for human and cultural behaviour falling into a cyclical, not linear mode (Scheub 3).

Under the influence of Theng'eta, Nyakinyua, Karega, and Abdalla also reveal their past histories and there are important recognitions. Nyakinyua reveals her husband's heroic resistance against colonial subjugation and oppression. Karega discloses his relationship with Munira's sister, Mukami, and the fact that he is Nding'uri's brother. For the first time, Munira discovers that his sister Mukami committed suicide on Karega's account, and this recognition totally severs his relationship with Karega. The revelation that Nding'uri was Karega's brother was astonishing to Abdalla, because Nding'uri was his childhood companion. During the Mau Mau period Abdalla used to deliver with Nding'uri bullets to freedom fighters until Kimeria betrayed them. Subsequently Nding'uri was arrested and hanged. Therefore, he had vowed to kill Kimeria and avenge Nding'uri's blood. After the Theng'eta drinking ceremony the narrative in Petals of Blood quickly moves to its climax and denouement.

Repetition, one of the well-defined stylistic features of folklore, is also utilized by Ngũgĩ in Petals of Blood. Stratton points out that the events are narrated in cyclical patterns. Events are first narrated by an omniscient narrator and then reiterated by the individual characters. The novel begins by summarising the main events of the narrative, which are gradually expanded through different characters' reminiscences and recounted by Munira in his report to the police. There is a constant movement backward and forward to recapture events in the past or project to those in the future. For instance, the murder of the three prominent businessmen Kimeria, Chui, and Mzigo, presented at the beginning of the novel in the compact style of a proverb-riddle, as a statement and a puzzle, is finally expanded upon as each of the main characters gives their various statements to the police. There is also repetition of certain images and symbols throughout Petals of Blood. The image of fire which recurs constantly in the novel is a case in point.

Single words and phrases are also repeated. During the journey, Abdalla sees a vision in which the word "new" is reiterated to underscore his "new thoughts, new desires, [and] new possibilities" (136). Karega also repeats the word "fact" for emphasis. Karega is convinced that "The oppression of black people is a fact. The scattering of Africans into the four corners of the earth is a fact ... Africa is one of the richest continents ... is a fact ... our people resisted European intrusion is a fact" (246). During the Theng'eta ritual the phrase "millet power of God" is repeated as an opening formula to the narration of every character's story. The list of Africa's heroic freedom fighters which Abdalla recounts during the journey is recapitulated by Karega, in his dream, after the Theng'eta ritual. Like the traditional griot, Ngũgĩ repeats what he wants to say many times so that the reader may not miss the point of his story. The purpose of the story is to enable our children to "look at the things that deformed us yesterday, that are deforming us today. They must also look at the things which formed us yesterday, that will creatively form us into a new breed of men and women who will not be ashamed to link hands with children from other lands ... [and] struggle against those things that dwarf us" (Petals 247).

Devil on the Cross, unlike Petals of Blood, was written in Gĩkũyũ for the Gĩkũyũ peasants and workers. For that reason its structure is much simpler and more straightforward than the structure of Petals of Blood. Ngũgĩ points out that he "wanted to go for a simpler plot, a simpler or clearer narrative line, a stronger story element ... without looking down upon or patronising the intended worker/peasant readership" (Decolonising 77). Like Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross takes up the theme of exploitation and conveys it through a preponderance of folkloric elements that structure the narrative and underscore the political message. Every folkloric element and Biblical allusion is carefully selected to achieve the overall purpose of raising the consciousness of the masses about the need to change the corrupt neo-colonial political system in the country. The author, in a prologue, declares his purpose and intention by narrating his story, under the guise of the traditional Gĩkũyũ griot, the Gicandi player, the prophet of justice. The "singer of the tale", the author, narrates his tale with ease, utilizing the oral techniques of the Gicandi player because the story is narrated in Gĩkũyũ, the language of the griot. The folkloric elements are not only numerous, but comfortably integrated into the fabric of the novel. They are used "as narrative devices to supplement the conventional ones of scene and summary" (Haring 98).

Devil on the Cross centres on the exploitation and discarding of Warĩĩnga by the old man of Ngorika and, furthermore, symbolizes the exploitation of peasants and workers by the comprador bourgeoisie. Because this topic is unpalatable, the author-narrator conveys his reluctance to narrate it through two proverbs in question form:

> Who am I - the mouth that ate itself? Is it not said that an antelope hates less the one who sees it than the one who shouts to alert others to its presence? (7).

Nevertheless, he decides to proceed with his scandalous tale because he has a moral duty to expose social injustice, and he believes that the masses would like the social ills of their society to be exposed, for the proverb says "The voice of the people is the voice of God" (8). Ngũgĩ emphasizes his moral duty through the use of the Biblical phraseology of the Beatitudes:

> Happy is the man who is able to discern the pitfalls in his path, for he can avoid them. Happy is the traveller who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up (7).

In this novel the proverbs are "the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe viii). Ogunjimi notes that, Ngũgĩ utilizes "proverbs, fables and parables" in Devil on the Cross as a means of criticising "the permeation of every aspect of the contemporary social matrix by acculturation" (58). In a cautionary proverb: "Aping others cost the frog its buttocks" (Devil 12), Warĩinga is warned against the facile acculturation that compels her to imitate others. Like Clementina in Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino, Warĩinga's apemanship cost her the beautiful colour of her skin, and her body ends by being "covered with light and dark spots like the guinea fowl" (Devil 11). "In the p'Bitekian comic satirical mood, Ngũgĩ flays the blacks who undergo the biological process of ecdysis" (Ogunjimi 58). This criticism is aimed at "the intellectual class and the clientelism of the comprador class" (Ogunjimi 58).

Through proverbs Ngũgĩ manages to socialize his reader. To achieve this process of socialization Ngũgĩ capitalizes on the flexibility of proverbs. Finnegan states that, "flexibility is one of the chief characteristics of the proverb" (420). The same proverb may be used as "advice, instruction, or warning, and may be cited in situations which may seem far removed from the original application, or even in the contradictory senses" (Finnegan 420). Scheub further points out that:

> The proverb is a metaphorical relationship, tying an old saying to a situation with which it may or may not have a clearly perceived relationship, but that, with thought, reveals a 'valid cryptogram' for that real life experience.... Proverbs are tired cliches only when viewed in isolation, in a book or collection, for example. But when they are placed into a realistic context, they become vital, even dynamic. What gives them freshness is the experience to which they are giving form (18).

The numerous proverbs in Devil on the Cross add both dynamism and freshness to the situations and contexts to which they are applied. For instance, the proverb "Too much haste splits the yam" justifies the slow pace of Mwaũra's Matatu-taxi and also criticizes Nditika wa Ngũũnji's haste in telling his wife about his grand plan to manufacture extra body parts for the rich. Mwaũra also uses the proverb that the author-narrator used at the beginning of the novel, "the mouth that ate itself", as self-criticism for having used his sweet tongue to entice Wangari to his vehicle when, unbeknownst to him, Wangari had no money. The incident makes him so angry that he exposes his malevolence and, consequently, feels guilty throughout the journey to Ilmorog. Ngumbu Njururi, in his Gĩkũyũ Proverbs, explains the proverb "the mouth that ate itself" by equating it to the English saying, "A fool's tongue is long enough to cut his own throat" (40). In the context of the author-narrator the proverb is ironic, because Devil on the Cross was written in prison, after the author had written Ngaahika Ndeenda which had metaphorically "cut his own throat".

Ngũgĩ also utilizes proverbs for the purpose of characterization. For instance, the following proverbs portray Warĩĩnga's changed attitude after her impregnation by the old man of Ngorika and her consequent dropping out of school:

> No one repents on account of another's sins.
>
> There is no one who regrets the going as much as the returning.
>
> To be smiled at is not to be loved (18).

The sexual harassment Warĩĩnga receives reflects the decadence of neo-colonial Kenya where women are expected to prostitute themselves in order to be employed. Warĩĩnga's bosses justify their behaviour through proverbs such as these:

> The case of a fool takes a long time to settle.
>
> Every court session opens with feasting.
>
> No man licks an empty hand (rendered in Kiswahili in the Gĩkũyũ text as Mkono mtupu haulambwi (19).

Warĩĩnga, alias Kareendi, soon discovers that even her young friends adhere to this perverted ethic. Through numerous proverbs they try to sway Warĩĩnga to their immoral philosophy, but she rejects their twisted world view with proverbs that deconstruct their rationalization of corruption. They convey their point of view through the following proverbs:

The seeds in the gourd are not all of the same type.

He who saves food will never suffer from hunger.

A restricted diet is monotonous (20).

Warĩinga counters their argument with a number of proverbs that state:

A restless child leaves home in search of meat just as a goat is about to be slaughtered.

Too much eating ruins the stomach.

A borrowed necklace may lead to the loss of one's own (20).

Proverbs are also used in place of a descriptive narrative and dialogue. For example, Boss Kihara employs several proverbs to justify his intended adulterous relationship with Warĩinga:

Too much haste splits the yam.

The hunter who stalks his prey may frighten it off in the end (20).

One doesn't use scentless perfume when going to a dance (22).

Because he would like to commit adultery his wife now becomes "a scentless perfume". The Old Man of Ngorika also uses the same proverb, later in the novel, in a similar context. This is not surprising because Boss Kihara and the Old Man of Ngorika are "birds of a feather that fly together" to borrow an English cliche.

By rejecting Boss Kihara's advances, Warĩinga loses her job, her boyfriend, and her house. The proverb: "When a bird in flight gets tired it will land on any tree" (33), aptly summarizes Warĩinga's situation. Having lost everything, she has no alternative but to travel to Ilmorog in the pathetic old Matatu-taxi.

While on the journey to Ilmorog the different travellers employ proverbs to reinforce their arguments. Mwaũra encourages Wangari to air her problems because "Wisdom hidden in the heart can never win a law suit" (36). With this encouragement Wangari speaks up, but because she requests a free ride to Ilmorog, Mwaura is so angry that he literally throws her out of the Matatu. Muturi, however, settles the dispute with the proverb: "No animal cries out in pain unless it has been hurt" (37). According to Finnegan proverbs are usually utilized in situations of conflict. Muturi utilizes an apt proverb to resolve the conflict between Mwaũra and Wangari. In most cases the proverbs are self-explanatory in the contexts in which they are used.

In contrast to the long prosaic passages that Ngũgĩ utilized in Petals of Blood to express his point of view, in Devil on the Cross he employs proverbs to convey the same ideas concisely and clearly so that they can be easily understood by his new audience. Muturi, for example, employs a series of proverbs, to portray the communality and solidarity that helps the human society to work together to change the laws of nature:

> a single finger cannot kill a louse;
> a single log cannot make a fire last
> through the night;
> a single man however strong,
> cannot build a bridge across
> a river;

> many hands can lift a weight
>
> however heavy (52).

This communal ethic is diametrically opposed to the individualistic egocentric philosophy that the comprador bourgeoisie at the Devil's Feast adhere to. Later in the novel, a pile of proverbs are employed to encourage Warĩĩnga to participate in the process of change:

> Cleanliness is bathing.
>
> A hero is known only on the battle field.
>
> A good dancer is known only in the dance arena.
>
> The heroism of life can be discovered only in the battle of life (216-217).

By utilizing several proverbs in different contexts, Ngũgĩ illuminates the meaning and interpretation of Gĩkũyũ proverbs. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points out:

> The significance of a proverb is not in ... the proverb itself but in the meaning which particular participants give in a specific context ... proverbs, are statements of group norms ... [and] norms are ideas [which] can specify the many fine distinctions necessary to accommodate different persons, times, occasions and circumstances (127).

It is interesting to note that the use of proverbs in Devil on the Cross does not depend on the age of the speaker but on the situation to which the proverb is being applied. This is why Ogunjimi contrasts Achebe's usage of proverbs, which he terms "nativism", with Ngũgĩ's revolutionary application of proverbs in Devil on the Cross.

Like the proverbs, the riddles are manipulated to convey Ngũgĩ's political message. In the context of Devil on the Cross the riddles are not games for children, as normally viewed in anthropological studies. Finnegan concedes that riddles are closely related to proverbs and also to other aspects of literary expressions, but concludes that riddles are "considered to be the special domain of children and, unlike proverbs, to be for entertainment rather than for serious consideration" (426). However, in Devil on the Cross Ngũgĩ utilizes them as proverb-riddles that are for "serious consideration". The riddles, like the proverbs, are utilized as commentaries on the major theme of the novel and to express the author's ideas.

Karega, in Petals of Blood, was seeking to resolve the riddle of life through study and research, just as Gatuĩria, in Devil on the Cross, is requested by Muturi and Wangari to solve the riddle of inequality: "Why do the masses toil and receive nothing while those who do not work reap where they have not sown? Is this the law of God or of Man?" (57). Wangari's questions formulated from the story of Genesis, in the Old Testament, beg for an answer. It also echoes Munira's questions in Petals of Blood where he wanted to find out the difference between the law of God, the law of Man, and the law of Nature (22). At first Wangari gives traditional answers to the riddles Muturi poses to Warĩĩnga. But Muturi is applying old riddles to new situations. Muturi asks the first riddle:

> **Muturi**: I walk this and that way!
>
> **Wangari**: The way of hunters.
>
> **Muturi**: No!
>
> **Wangari**: Take a forfeit!
>
> **Muturi**: The path of builders! Answer another riddle.
>
> **Wangari**: I will!
>
> **Muturi**: I walk this way and that way!
>
> **Wangari**: The path of builders.
>
> **Muturi**: No. Give me a forfeit.
>
> **Wangari**: It's yours.
>
> **Muturi**: The path of workers, answer another.
>
> **Wangari**: I will.
>
> **Muturi**: I walk this way and that way toward a revolution.
>
> **Wangari**: The paths of workers.
>
> **Muturi**: Yes and no. You owe me a forfeit, but I won't take everything, for you have got half the answer. The answer is the path of resistance ... and those are the paths made by workers (71-72).

Because the old riddles are being consciously manipulated to convey Ngũgĩ's political message, Muturi formulates new answers for the age-old riddles. Similar to Nyakinyua's and Njuguna's poetic contest in Petals of Blood, Muturi and Wangari hold a riddle contest to underscore the novel's message and to comment on Muturi's character. Like the message of his riddle, Muturi chose the path of resistance and rejected poor wages which led to his dismissal. But his rejection of poor wages symbolizes the fact that the peasants and workers are no longer going to accept things as they are. In the same manner that the old riddles acquire new answers in a modern context, the peasants and workers are going to change their situation.

Apart from riddles, Ngũgĩ utilizes songs as part of his narrative technique and as a commentary on certain ideas and actions of the characters. The whole narrative develops through prose and poetry because the author-narrator casts his tale in the song mode when he introduces himself as a Gicandi player. The following song is used as a commentary on the individualistic philosophy of capitalism:

> That which pecks never pecks for another.
> That which pinches never pinches for another.
> That which journeys never journeys for another.
> Where is the seeker who searches for another? (16).

With this song Ngũgĩ sets the denunciatory tone of the novel. Throughout Devil on the Cross Ngũgĩ "castigates [the] absurd morality of bourgeois idealogy" (Ogunjimi 60), which is based on an extreme individualism that leads to corruption and exploitation of the peasants and workers by the comprador bourgeoisie of neo-colonial Kenya. The peasants and workers like Warĩinga are admonished through this song to actively participate in bringing about change. The songs that Mwaũra sings on the way to Ilmorog provide some comic relief to the serious discussion the travellers are having. The religious song that he introduces about knocking the Devil gives Muturi an opportunity to introduce the Mau Mau theme. Muturi demonstrates how the freedom fighters inverted the Christian hymns in order to convey the message about the struggle. Similarly, Muturi changes the words of the song about Harambee to reflect the political reality of neo-colonialism in which social services like fund raising only benefit the rich. Wangari, who was a freedom fighter, joins Muturi in the song and their voices blend "together beautifully, like a mixture of the perfume oils of the same kind" (47). Their song, in addition, is employed to underscore the theme of the peasants' and workers' revolution that the author calls for. Through their song Muturi and Wangari portray the plight of the peasants and workers who are exploited by the bourgeois, who "eat" the children of the poor. The idea of the bourgeois eating the children of the poor recalls Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and Gulliver's Travels. According to Ogunjimi "The virulent Swiftian satire and Brechtian comic-satirical dramatic elements fuse with allegorical style of Bunyan to produce the mock-heroic technique of Pope and Dryden" (57). The satire is directed at the comprador bourgeoisie whose greed and corruption has turned them into cannibals because they are like the legendary Nding'uri who sold his soul to the Devil. Because of their soulless state they have become deaf and blind to the needs of the nation as Gatuĩria's song indicates:

> The deaf man, the deaf man,
> The deaf man is he who can't hear for the nation!

The blind man, the blind man,

The blind man is he who can't see for the nation! (58)

The callousness of the comprador bourgeoisie is finally dramatized at the Devil's Feast. In the first journey to Ilmorog "the passengers prepare us for [the] allegorical gathering" (Ogunjimi 60). Wangari's song about chasing the Devil significantly comments on the major theme of the novel, the eradication of the oppressive neo-colonial system. The song also illuminates the title of the novel "Devil on the Cross". The author wished to annihilate all forms of evil from his society by crucifying the Devil, the symbol of evil. Helping him are patriotic peasants and workers, like Wangari, who portray their involvement in the process of ridding the society of evil, in this song:

Come one and all

And behold the wonderful sight

Of chasing away the Devil

And all his disciples,

Come one and all (74).

The song becomes like a theme song for Devil on the Cross and is reiterated several times in the novel. The author-narrator defines the meaning of the Devil and God in the novel. According to the author, "God and Satan are images of our actions in our brains as we struggle with nature in general and with human nature in particular.... The nature of God is the image of the good we do here on Earth. The nature of Satan is the image of the evil we do here on Earth" (Devil 57). In this definition Ngũgĩ demystifies the concepts of God and Satan by bringing them down from the supernatural to the human level. From a literary perspective, the "Devil figure is an archetype whose variants we find in D.O. Fagunwa and Amos Tutuola's folktales" (61). In Decolonising the Mind, Ngũgĩ explains how he came to utilize the idea of selling one's soul to the Devil:

> For a long time I had been intrigued by the Faust theme in literature. The theme reappears in several works of European literature: Marlowe's "Faustus", Goethe's "Faust", Thomas Mann's "Dr. Faustus" and Bulgakov's "Master and Margarita". But I always suspected that the story of the good man who surrenders his soul to evil for immediate earthly gains of wealth, intellect and power was universal and was rooted in the lore of the peasantry.... Why not tell the story of men who had sold their souls and that of the nation to the foreign devil of imperialism? Why not tell the story of evil that takes pride in evil? Why not tell the story of robbers who take pride in robbing the masses? (81).

Through proverbs, riddles, songs, and tales, Ngũgĩ persistently indicts the neo-colonial system in Kenya. Where the folkloric elements are found inadequate, Ngũgĩ supplements them with detailed explanations through prosaic passages that are relegated to individual characters or the omniscient narrator. Muturi, Wangari, and Gatuĩria comment on the shortcomings of the present political system and their supposed self-help projects. Through the character of Muturi, Ngũgĩ delineates the differences between the organization of the home guards and imperialists and that of the patriots. This clear cut division of the society into two camps, villains and saints, in itself a characteristic of folklore, has been said, by most critics, to be an oversimplification of societal problems. However, it could be argued that Ngũgĩ simplifies his narrative structure to communicate his message clearly to his new audience of peasants and workers. Most African critics differ from their Western counterparts on the role of art as a didactic tool. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa and Madubuike, categorically state that the distaste for didacticism in African literary works, by some of the Western critics, emanates from the fact that "these critics perceive such didacticism as coming from traditional African values whose communalist ethos they find antithetical to [their own individualistic] bourgeois ethos" (135). In the same vein, Soyinka states that African writers "are more preoccupied with visionary projection of society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature" (64). Cock and Okenimkpe raise the same question of the place of didacticism in literature and come to a neutral position by stating that:

> If ideas are left entirely implicit, unstated, many readers may miss some or even all of the essential points that a writer seeks to convey ... on the other hand, bare explicitness is in danger of reducing the average reader's interest and receptivity (236).

The didacticism in *Devil on the Cross* "is not isolated in occasional passages. It is the very essence of the book both in its satirical exposures and its more sober demonstrations" (Cook and Okenimkpe 240). For that reason, Cook and Okenimkpe conclude that "Ngũgĩ will no doubt judge the success of his moral fable by its impact on the general readership he has aimed at, rather than by any critical consensus" (237). Judging by its first reception by the people for whom it was intended the results were very encouraging. The "absurd morality of bourgeois ideology" (Ogunjimi 60), is contrasted with the positive communal ethic of the peasant and workers through the juxtaposition of two songs that express these opposite views. While the patriots sing:

> Great love I found there
> Among women and children.
> A bean fell to the ground -
> We split it among ourselves (Ngũgĩ 39).

the home guards and imperialists sing in contradiction:

> Self-love and the love of selling out
> Among the traitors of the land.
> The bean we steal from the people-
> We struggle to see who can grab it all (39).

Apart from educating the masses, Ngũgĩ utilizes song in Devil on the Cross for the purposes of preserving Gĩkũyũ traditional values for posterity. Gatuĩria's song, for instance, records the whole history of Kenya from the pre-colonial times to the present. In epic style, the song celebrates the heroic history of the Kenyan people utilizing all the musical instruments of different Kenyan communities. By so doing, Ngũgĩ transcends his tribal boundaries and encompasses all the communities of Kenya. In Devil on the Cross Warĩĩnga and Gatuĩria sing a song of praise for our nation to counteract the destructive philosophy that the comprador bourgeoisie are perpetuating. This heroic song Gatuĩria is composing finally develops into a great epic song, in five movements, which Gatuĩria would like to present to Warĩĩnga as an engagement present. The song helps to enhance the plot of the novel and to sharpen Gatuĩria's character. He is one of the elite who hesitantly chooses to join the people in their struggle. Like the author, Gatuĩria repudiates his bourgeois class and joins hands with the people.

Apart from songs, Ngũgĩ also utilizes folktales to comment on the major theme of the novel and to enhance his plot. During the first journey to Ilmorog, Gatuĩria shares some of the folktales he learned from The Old Man of Nakuru Bahati with fellow travellers. Gatuĩria went to The Old Man of Bahati with the usual anthropological assumptions about African folktales and what they constitute. He wanted, for example, to listen to ogre tales. To his request, The Old Man of Nakuru Bahati replied:

> There is no difference between old and modern stories. Stories are stories. All stories are old. All stories are new. All stories belong to tomorrow. And stories are not about ogres or about animals or about men. All stories are about human beings (61-62).

Through The Old Man of Bahati, Ngũgĩ delineates the significance of art in society. To Ngũgĩ, Art is a "nation's soul", and without it a nation will be like a "mere shell" (62). To illustrate his message, The Old Man from Nakuru, Bahati narrates a number of tales to Gatuĩria. The first tale he narrates is about a peasant farmer who used to carry an ogre on his back. This tale is utilized by the author to underline the theme of exploitation in the novel and to prepare the reader for the encounter with the human "ogres" at the Devil's Feast, to which the passengers in the Matatu taxi are going. Like the peasant farmer in the tale, the Kenyan peasants and workers have always been exploited by the comprador bourgeoisie whom Ngũgĩ characterizes as a parasitic class of blood suckers. The diviner gives the peasant farmer a prescription to rid himself of the ogre, and similarly Ngũgĩ advises the Kenyan peasants and workers to eradicate their modern ogres through revolutionary means. In the case of the tale of Nding'uri, the peasants and workers are advised not to emulate him because he sold his soul to the Devil. Structurally, Nding'uri's story is significant because it allegorically represents the episode of the Devil's Feast that forms the dramatic core of the novel.

To introduce the reader to the world of modern "ogres", Ngũgĩ utilizes the Biblical parable of the Talents to illustrate the philosophical framework of the comprador-bourgeoisie. In addition, Ngũgĩ employs the parable to emphasize how the Bible was used to rationalize the exploitation of peasants and workers. Ngũgĩ parodies the Biblical parable in order to demonstrate the interrelationship between the local comprador bourgeoisie and their foreign allies. The parable in Devil on the Cross, unlike the Biblical one which talks of the kingdom of God, now begins with:

> The Kingdom of Earthly wiles can be likened unto a ruler who foresaw that the day would come when he would be thrown out of a certain country by the masses and their guerrilla freedom fighters (82).

In the space of about four and half pages Ngũgĩ recreates the parable of the Talents to read like a modern tale of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Through parody, Ngũgĩ illuminates the Biblical parable of the Talents that the Kenyan Christians have always taken for granted. This re-casting of the parable, in addition, helps to clarify how Christianity was utilized to manipulate the peasants and workers of Kenya into subjugation. If we bear in mind the fact that Ngũgĩ's Gĩkũyũ audiences are familiar with the Biblical parable we can understand how easy it would be for them to make a transition from the usual Christian interpretation to the political one. The technique of applying old stories to new situations is one that the oral artist utilizes all the time. "The narrator of a story is likely to introduce his own favourite tricks of verbal style and presentation and to be influenced in his wording by audience and occasion" (Finnegan 386). Moreover, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "parables are a traditional technique for coping with problematic Social situations" (107). Commenting on the contextual characteristic of folkloric performance Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states that in a "narrative performance in which a narrator embeds a tale in a stretch of non-narrative discourse ... the raconteur will usually take considerable care to fit the particular tale to the immediate social context" (107).

Ngũgĩ subverts the core message of the parable and portrays the servant who buried his talent as the enlightened one, for he had discovered the real nature of his master; he was a cruel master who reaped where he did not sow, and who seized things over which he had never shed any sweat. This parable, like the folktales, is utilized to highlight the compradorial status of the participants in the Devil's Feast. Like their masters, the participants in the Devil's Feast want to reap where they have not sown. Amuka characterizes this part of the novel as the song of abuse, and indeed it is, but unlike the traditional song of abuse, it is not amusing, despite its grotesque realism. The description of the comprador bourgeoisie is too vitriolic to be amusing. To add insult to injury, Ngũgĩ places the Devil on the cross, an act which the Christian clergy in Kenya considered sacrilegious. For that reason they were so outraged that they withdrew their support of Ngũgĩ despite Ngũgĩ's fight against injustice. Nevertheless, Ngũgĩ does not put the Devil on the cross to be worshipped but to be utterly destroyed. It is a complete misinterpretation to insinuate, as Cook and Okenimkpe do, that the image of the Devil on the Cross could even remotely imply Devil worship. Ngũgĩ does not necessarily repudiate the core of the Christian message that he was seeking in The River Between; he rejects the way Christianity is manipulated to subjugate the peasants and workers in Third World countries. Mudimbe states that: "The more carefully one studies the history of missions in Africa, the more difficult it becomes not to identify it with cultural propaganda, patriotic motivations, and commercial interests, since the mission's programme is indeed more complex than the simple transmission of Christian faith" (45). In Kimeenderi's story at the Devil's Feast, churches and mosques are identified as tools of subjugation. Their platforms are employed as instruments of brainwashing the masses in order to convince them that "the system of the robbery of human labour power and human skills - is ordained by God" (Devil 188). Ngũgĩ strongly castigates all exploiters whether they come in the name of God or of the Devil. By utilizing archetypal symbols drawn from Gĩkũyũ and Biblical mythology, Ngũgĩ ensures that his message is driven home. Furthermore, by writing in Gĩkũyũ, Ngũgĩ ascertained that the Gĩkũyũ peasants and workers understood his message.

Ngũgĩ also borrows the stylistic techniques of folklore such as allegorical names, exaggeration, the panegyric style of self-praise, repetition, and similes. Most of the names in Devil on the Cross are allegorical. Some of them like those of Gitutu are grotesque. Gitutu in Gĩkũyũ means gigantic jigger and Gataang'uru means arrogance. Rendered in English Gitutu's Gĩkũyũ name would be Gigantic Jigger son of Arrogance. When it comes to Gitutu's English names, Ngũgĩ grossly exaggerates his cynicism and gives him the most repugnant appellation: Rottenborough Groundflesh Shitland Narrow Isthmus Joint Stock Brown. His other comrade in theft has a milder Christian name, although it incorporates the ogre motif of the blood-sucking monster. He is called Lord Gabriel Bloodwell-Stuart-Jones. Like their names, their stories of extortion and exploitation are despicable. Ngũgĩ utilizes the oral artist's art of hyperbole to vilify the comprador bourgeoisie for their exploitation of the Kenyan masses. Kĩhaahu wa Gatheeca, for instance, praises his theft in panegyric terms that recall those of the traditional epic hero. Only in this context Kĩhaahu is no hero, he is a thief and a robber of the people's property. Kĩhaahu boasts in the most inflated language about his prowess in thieving:

> I am the cock that crows in the morning and silences all others. I am the lion that roars in the forest, making elephants urinate. I am the eagle that flies in the sky, forcing hawks to seek refuge in their nests. I am the wind that stills all breezes. I am the lightning that dazzles all light. I am the thunder that silences all noise. I am the sun in the heavens during the day. I am the moon, King of stars, at night. I am King of Kings of Modern theft and robbery (109).

Without the last line that subverts this song of praise, it sounds in every way like any traditional panegyric song. Only our praise singer is not a hero but a thief, who robs people by offering pretentious "high class" education for their children and by renting shanty houses to the workers, at exorbitant prices. Furthermore, he would like to build houses the size of a bird's nest for the masses. Gĩtutu wa Gataang'ũrũ was robbing the masses by buying land cheaply and selling it back to them at very high prices. Like Mugo of A Grain of Wheat the masses erroneously sing his praises. His proposal is to sell soil and air in tins to the peasants. Nditika wa Ngũũnji, on the other hand, would like to manufacture extra body parts for the rich, a proposition which finally turns the elite into the two-mouthed ogres of Gĩkũyũ folktales.

In addition to hyperbole and the panegyric, Ngũgĩ employs repetition of songs, proverbs, and themes for the purposes of emphasizing his message. Wangari's song, about chasing the Devil, is repeated several times in the novel, as are certain proverbs in different contexts. Warĩĩnga's story, for instance, is represented at the beginning of the novel in the parable of Kareendi, and then reiterated in the author-narrator's description of her autobiography in chapter five. There is also repetition of single words to emphasize a point. In Nding'uri's story the word "property" is repeated to underscore how rich Nding'uri had become. Nding'uri is supposed to have begun "to fart property, to shit property, to think property, to dream property, to talk property, to sweat property, to piss property" (64) (emphasis added).

There is also the binarism that Levi-Strauss indicated to be a characteristic of myth. The whole narrative is philosophically structured on the binary opposition of Good and Evil. Ngũgĩ divides his fictional world into two camps, the Good camp represented by peasants and workers and the Evil camp represented by the comprador bourgeoisie and their foreign allies. The good camp of the peasants and workers at the beginning belongs to the world of the oppressed, but at the end the author suggests an alternative world for the oppressed: the revolutionary world. The peasants and workers can, therefore, deconstruct the oppressive order created for them by the comprador bourgeoisie and create a new one in which there will be no oppression. If the peasants unite, they will be able to turn the tables on the rich oppressors. In the parable of Kareendi there are also a number of binary oppositions. In Kareendi's railing against The Old Man who has just rejected her, Kareendi represents her repudiation of this despicable man in binary terms that will separate her world from his:

> You think you are sugar itself? I'd rather drink tea without sugar. You imagine that you are a bus? I'd rather walk. You think you are a house? I'd prefer to sleep in the open air. Or the bed itself, perhaps? I choose the floor. I've lost my faith in silken-tongued gigolos (18).

All the similes in Devil on the Cross are drawn from the natural environment of the Gĩkũyũ society. For instance, at the beginning of the novel Warĩĩnga's voice is characterized as being "as smooth as perfume oil"; her eyes shine "like stars in the night"; and her breasts sway "jauntily like two ripe fruits" (Devil 11). During the Devil's Feast, Mwaũra reports to Gatuĩria and Warĩĩnga what happened at the lunch break slowly, "like the chameleon that was sent to the people by God but never managed to deliver its message" (164). In the same context, Gatuĩria's report of Wangari's arrest pours out "like a river in full spate that finds a weak spot at which to burst its banks" (196).

Gatuĩria also characterizes the intellectuals' behaviour in trying to belong both to their own elite class and to the class of peasants and workers as being "like the hyena who tried to walk along two different roads at the same time" (205). And when the peasants finally routed the thieves and robbers from their cave

Gĩtutu and Nditika ran "like two spiders with eggs", and the crowds roared at the escaping thieves "like angry lions whose cubs had been taken away from them" (213). Mwaũra's Matatu-taxi was so old that it "moaned and screamed like several hundred dented axes being ground at the same time" (31). Ngũgĩ, like the traditional griot, utilizes elements drawn from the natural environment of his Gĩkũyũ community.

Unlike the comprador bourgeoisie who are transformed into ogres, Warĩinga, like Wanja, is transformed in a folkloric manner from a young dejected school girl to a well educated young woman with mechanical engineering skills, knowledge of Karate for her self-defence, and, finally, into a pistol-wielding revolutionary. Warĩinga makes a second journey to Ilmorog to introduce Gatuĩria to her parents. The journey to Ilmorog extends to Nakuru, Gatuĩria's home, where Ngũgĩ wraps up his tale. When Warĩinga finally meets Gatuĩria's father, she realizes that he is The Old Man of Ngorika who destroyed her life. In the spirit of a revolutionary, Warĩinga shoots The Old Man of Ngorika, whom she characterizes in terms that describe his parasitic class as "a jigger, a louse, a weevil, a flea, a bedbug. He is mistletoe, a parasite that lives on the trees of other people's lives" (254). The game of the hunter and the hunted becomes reversed; the hunter now becomes the hunted. Warĩinga did not miss her target this time, unlike the time when she played this game with Gatuĩria's father before her dreams were shattered like a broken pot. This Warĩinga is the self-reliant Warĩinga who has the courage to shoot The Old Man of Ngorika without flinching.

She is the new Warĩinga who has "decided that she'll never again allow herself to be a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and windows of other people's lives.... The Warĩinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time" (Petals 216). This Warĩinga is the symbol of the new Kenyan woman, who is ready to take control of her life and not let the likes of The Old Man of Ngorika manipulate and exploit her. By getting rid of The Old Man of Ngorika, Ngũgĩ symbolically eradicates the perpetrators of exploitation, changes the oppressive neo-colonial system that they represent, and leaves room for the peasants and workers to create a society in which equal distribution of wealth will be realized. Some of the critics observe that Ngũgĩ would like to create a "Marxist" Utopia. Regardless of whether the society Ngũgĩ longs for is Marxist or not, Ngũgĩ, as the singer of the tale, would like to see a more just society created in the Third World countries. He states, in the guise of the "Prophet of Justice", that he would like to present all the facts "before anyone can judge our children" (9).

Unlike the traditional tale, Devil on the Cross does not have a happy ending. The happiness of the peasants and workers still lies somewhere in the future. Warĩinga's gesture of killing The Old Man of Ngorika simply suggests the direction in which the revolution should go: as in Petals of Blood, "LA LUTA CONTINUA" (261). Cook and Okenimkpe aptly conclude:

> The final climax shatters many illusions and unnerves us, leaving us disturbed and disoriented at the last. Of course, it is meant to do so. It is no part of Ngũgĩ's plan to soothe us into complacency as if we

> were at the dawning of a new age in society already. The brutal facts of neo-colonialist reality confront our lulled senses. The massed forces of the comprador elite smash the idyll (137).

Because of Ngũgĩ's hard hitting denunciation of the comprador bourgeoisie, his struggle to liberate the peasants and workers politically, economically, and culturally will be a difficult one. The difficulty, according to Amuka, is enhanced by the fact that his message, which is supposed to reach the masses and awaken their consciousness is frozen in print and, ironically, reaches the comprador-bourgeoisie first. Moreover, the same bourgeoisie that he castigates, and their foreign allies, are not only the main consumers of his literature, but the controllers of the channels of distribution. They can arbitrarily block the distribution of his writing and in so doing thwart his intention.

However, one could build a counter argument that demonstrates the advantages of having Ngũgĩ's message in the written form. Both Goody and Ong detail the great advantages of the written word. Paradoxically, the fixity of the written word "assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers" (Ong 81). Writing, therefore, liberates the word because it gives it an added power that the oral word does not possess; the power to reach individuals in the absence of the author. Devil on the Cross in its written form can reach many more Kenyans and non-Kenyans than if Ngũgĩ had addressed a public rally. It can also be read unobtrusively. Moreover, in its written form it can be preserved for posterity. If it is not read immediately, it could be read a year later, ten years later, or even a century later. Its message, like any moral message, could be beneficial to the future generations as it is to the present. If the present generation cannot stomach its message, the future generation might utilize it to gauge where "the rain began to beat them" as Achebe put it. Camara Laye rightly admonishes us to continue to commit to writing our folklore, both in African and in foreign languages. Although most of the Gĩkũyũ rural audience is illiterate, their children will not remain illiterate for ever. Even now, there are enough literate Gĩkũyũs who can read the novel individually and also read to others, as Ngũgĩ clearly illustrates in Detained. Like the message, the folkloric elements within Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross have been preserved indefinitely and in this written form they can be revitalized any time to serve a social purpose.

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CHAPTER SIX

LAYE'S SUNDIATA EPIC:LE MAITRE DE LA PAROLE

In contrast to the literary works we have already discussed, which incorporate elements of folklore for artistic as well as didactic purposes, Le Maître de la parole is a work that is entirely based on folklore. It is a result of Laye's twenty years of research which he began around 1956 when he returned to Guinea. The actual recording of the epic from the griot, Babu Condé, took place in Fudama, Guinea, from the sixteenth of March to the sixteenth of April 1963. The epic is a combination of Sundiata's legendary history and the miraculous legend, which includes the genealogy of Sundiata's family, whose ancestry is traced back to Bilali Ibn Ka Mâma or Bilali Ibunâma as the Malinké pronounce it. The Arabs usually called him Bilali Kabs or Bilali the slave. In a footnote, Laye corrects some of the historical documentation on Bilali's origin, stating that Bilali was from Chad and not Ethiopia, as certain historians claim. According to Laye, Babu Condé narrated for him "four categories of Words", but in Le Maître de la parole he only recounted the first category, namely, "KUMA LAFOLO KUMA, the history of the great Sundiata, the son of the Buffalo-panther woman and of the lion, the first Emperor of Mali, or the History of the First Word" (The Guardian 30).

In relation to the authentic tradition of the Sundiata epic, Le Maître de la parole is usually categorized alongside Niane's book Soundiata ou l'épopée mandingue. Both texts are said to be complete representations of the Sundiata epic. However, both Laye's and Niane's versions "show signs of literary rehandling" (Belcher 233). Other versions which have appeared since the publication of Niane's prose rendition of the epic, are, according to Bulman "more faithful to the style of jeli (griot or bard)" (171). They include: a rendition by Kele Monson Jabate, published in three different forms (Diabate 1970 and 1975; Moser 1974); three Gambian versions (Innes 1974); and two from Kita (Johnson 1979 and 1986), and in addition, interpretation of the epic from a folkloric point of view (in works such as Bird 1972, 1977, Bird and Kendall 1980, and Johnson 1978, as well as a comparative survey of variants written as a thesis by Belcher 1985). Bulman also points out that the epic has been utilized as a historical source since Delaffosse's Haut-Senegal Niger in 1912 and that historians still rely on it for the history of medieval Mali (e.g. Levtzion 1980). This "two-fold study of the epic as art and history" has revealed "that the work [is] an amalgam of indigenous folkloric motifs, Wandersagen, and historical reminiscence, conflated into a narrative that reflects Malinké political, social and cultural realities and ideals" (Bulman 171).

In this chapter, we shall examine the place and use of folklore in Le Maître de la parole, emphasizing the main point of our thesis that folklore is deliberately incorporated in the literary works of Laye and Ngũgĩ for the purposes of fighting against colonialism and neo-colonialism, and also for the purposes of portraying an authentic African world, expressed through an authentic African idiom. In addition, they utilize folklore as a means of working "towards a definition, in and through literature, of a distinctive mode of thought and feeling, towards an imaginative apprehension and embodiment of an African spirit" with a hope of working out "a new spiritual coherence out of the historical disconnection between their African heritage and their modern experience" (Irele 10). Being only a chapter in a thesis on the use of folklore in both Laye's and Ngũgĩ's works, a detailed study of other variants of the Sundiata epic will not be undertaken. Reference will only be made to the other versions of the Sundiata epic as a means of illuminating our interpretation of Le Maître de la parole.

Le Maître de la parole was the culmination of Laye's search for his identity that began in L'Enfant noir, and, like Ngũgĩ's literary works in Gĩkũyũ, it was Laye's final homecoming. It "reflected in the deepest way [his] attachment to the Africa he left in 1947" (Hale 793), Like Ngũgĩ, Laye believed that the foundation of Africa's future social-political systems should be built on the oral tradition. In the introduction to Le Maître de la parole, Laye unequivocally states that:

> Si l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui est un continent neuf, parce qu'elle est née récemment à la souveraineté internationale, si elle doit cesser de faire figure de continent consommateur de civilisations uniquement, si cette Afrique, pour se réhabiliter face aux autres continents, doit apporter une danse plus rythmée à la ronde universelle à laquelle chaque civilisation particulière porte sa danse propre, c'est notre Tradition orale qui peut le mieux libérer cette danse et ce rythme. C'est en elle que se trouvent toutes les valeurs du passé africain, au

> triple plan moral, historique, et socio-politique (13-14).

Similarly, Ngũgĩ, in Detained, urges the:

> Kenyan writers to return to their roots, ... to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and speech and languages of Kenyan masses if they are to rise to the great challenge of recreating, in their poems, plays and novels, the epic grandeur of that history (196).

By reconstructing the Sundiata epic in Le Maitre de la parole, Laye recreated the "epic grandeur of [his] history" (Ngũgĩ 196). Likewise, through Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross, and The Trial of Dedan Kimathi Ngũgĩ recreated the epic grandeur of Kenyan history. Both Ngũgĩ and Laye paint a positive picture of the traditional African society, which they contrast with the oppressive colonial period. Laye submitted that, despite the colonial government's wish to assimilate the Malinké into the French culture, the Malinké were not completely overwhelmed by the French culture. There was always resistance against assimilation, supported by the griots, who continued "de revivre leur passé, de se nourrir de leur civilisation traditionnelle" (Le Maître 11). Ngũgĩ holds the same viewpoint as Laye's, for he states that in Kenya, people created "a resistance culture, a revolutionary culture of courage and patriotic heroism ... [expressed] in many patriotic songs, poems, plays and dances" (Detained 64-65).

Both Laye and Ngũgĩ believe that African civilizations have always exchanged ideas with the outside world and thus, oppose the notion that Africa was a closed dark continent. For instance, in the introduction to Le Maitre de la parole Laye states:

> les specialistes en cette matière nous diront bien un jour, avec certitude peut-être, s'il y eut des échanges entre le coeur de l'Afrique et Carthage, entre ce coeur et l'Egypte ancienne (11).

In Petals of Blood Ngũgĩ, similarly, states:

> Ilmorog ... river is now only a stream ... Results of the researches on the recent archaeological finds in Ilmorog may well add to the theories of Ogot, Muriuki, Were and Ochien'g about the origins and the movement of Kenyan peoples: they may also tell us whether the river is one of those referred to in ancient Hindu and Egyptian sacred literatures (67).

Like Ngũgĩ, Laye is a committed writer. His dedication at the beginning of Le Maître de la parole clearly illustrates his commitment. He dedicates Le Maître de la parole to: the continent of Africa; the Black Soul; and to all the peoples of Africa. But, more importantly, to the peasants and workers: "the tireless tiller of the soil ... leaning hard on his plough; the blacksmith with the rugged hands; the fisherman, back bent with days of craft or patience; to the youth of Africa, who are Africa's future; to the Black woman, bearing within [her] breast the spring of life; and to the patriotic politician, emancipator of [his] people" (The Guardian 13). As indicated in the dedication, Laye wrote Le Maître de la parole in order to preserve the African cultural heritage for future generations. Like Ngũgĩ, Laye praises the patriotic leaders of Africa and the role of Woman in the perpetuation of life. He then commissions the youth to emulate these heroic leaders of the past.

In his introduction to Le Maître de la parole Laye also defines certain concepts from an African point of view: civilization, the role of the griot and his art, and the general attitude of African people to art. He underlines the differences between the Africans' and the Europeans' attitudes to art. According to Laye, "La civilisation, c'est peut-être une façon de faire et de vivre ... Et les civilisations ont existé avant l'âge industriel, avant les progrès techniques qui en ont résulté" (14). Recognizing the fact that the griots are often disparaged by various critics of Malinké folklore, Laye describes the role of different types of griots, differentiating between griots who are merely "music peddlers" from true griots, the Belen-Tigi, guardians of the word. Laye explains that the Belen-Tigi do not wander around, they remain attached to tradition and to their native soil. It is because Laye believed in the significance of the Belen-Tigi that he went to "s'asseoir auprès des Anciens, pour puiser la sagesse, la science, l'histoire du Continent noir, à sa source la plus authentique, nous voulons dire : chez le griot traditionaliste" (Le Maître 34). Laye had returned "to the Malinké school of the griot" (Hale 791), whom Okot p'Bitek rightly called the professors of African culture.

Although the griot is correctly regarded as the custodian of historical tradition, Laye posits that the griot is, above all, an artist and his chants, his epics and his legends are works of art. In the performance of epics, the griot speaks from the heart and, in so doing, he exaggerates the facts and deforms the literal truth. To the layman, his epics are mere entertainment, but to the initiated, they are history. On the double meaning of the griot's art Laye further explains:

> Il a toujours dans le conte, dans le chant, dans la légende, deux vérités : la vérité première sciemment créée et périphérique, destinée à amuser l'auditoire; mais au revers de cette vérité premère, il y a une vérité seconde, profonde, autrement plus proche de la vérité, de la réalité, difficile à déceler par le profane : c'est la vérité historique (22).

Laye, in addition, explains the general attitude of Africans towards art, and according to him, Africans respond more sensitively to art, a mask or fetish, as well as spiritual matters, than Europeans because they live closer to nature. Unlike Europeans, who, when confronted with an intricate and metaphysical work of art, like that of Van Gogh, feel that:

> Il y a là une vibration que nous ne pouvons endurer longtemps, à laquelle nous cherchons bientôt à nous soustraire, qui paraît se relâcher un moment dans certains chefs-d'oeuvre de Van Gogh, sans que nous puissions, eux non plus, les supporter longtemps; cette vibration, elle ne nous amène pas à assimiler l'élément étranger, mais à le transmuer en une forme mieux à notre mesure. C'est très excitant, extrêmement excitant, mais ce n'est pas notre monde (Le Maître 17)

On the contrary, when Africans are:

> Devant les êtres et les choses ils nous semble, à nous autres

> Africains, qu'une source de l'existence s'ouvre, non pas un instant, mais constamement, et que (et non-comme si-) de profondeurs cachées dans toute vie se decouvrent directement. Il n'y a pas là une vibration que nous ne pouvons endurer longtemps, à laquelle nous cherchons à nous soustraire, mais bien une vibration que nous endurons sans nous lasser et à laquelle ne nous cherchons pas à nous soustraire, à laquelle, en vérité, nous ne pourrons nous soustraire.... Nous assimilons absolument cet élément ... [car] c'est très exactement notre monde (17).

Laye emphasizes the fact that Man is three dimensional: Mind, Body, and Soul, and that Man's spiritual aspect, the soul, is the most significant. His observation is that in the city, the machines sometimes strangle and suffocate the soul. In Le Maître de la parole, he emphasizes the role of mystery in human life, as he did in L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. More importantly, in recording Le Maître de la parole, Laye attempts to set straight the record of the Malinké medieval history, by demonstrating that the creation of the epic had nothing to do with the Arab influence; for the heroic history of the Mali Empire had been preserved by the griots in the epics which they recounted in their own language.

As already indicated, Le Maître de la parole is one of the Guinean variants of the Sundiata epic. Unlike King and Hale, who disregard its significance in relation to the Sundiata epic tradition, folklorists like Johnson, who has done extensive work on the Sundiata epic, acknowledge Le Maître de la parole and

Niane's Soundiata ou l'épopée mandingue as the Guinean variants (50). Like the other versions of the Sundiata epic Le Maître de la parole incorporates the "three core episodes without which the story of the Son-Jara [Sundiata] could not be told: ... [Sundiata's] birth and the origin of his rivalry with his half-brother, King Dankaran Tuman; his exile; and his coming to power in the country of the Manden" (Johnson 39).

Laye's version of the epic opens with the tale of the Buffalo-Woman of Dô, and, in folkloric style, introduces the main characters in the first paragraph: "Ils étaient deux chasseurs, l'aîné s'appelait Moké Moussa, le cadet, Moké Dantouman" (37). According to Bulman, the tale of the buffalo woman "is an optional introduction to the Sunjata epic of the Malinké and is also told as a separate story" (171-172). The tale recounts how the two hunters, who were brothers, ventured to kill the Buffalo of Dô, which was killing many hunters and destroying the country. The Buffalo was the double of the King's sister, Dô-Kamissa, who had the magical power of transforming herself into her tana, 'totem', the buffalo. Because her brother, Dô-Samô, had deprived her of her inheritance, she would metamorphosize into a buffalo, ravage rice-fields, and kill the hunters who attempted to annihilate her. In order to kill the buffalo the two hunters, Moké Mussa and Moké Dantuman, were to obey certain instructions the soothsayer gave them, saying:

> 1. que lorsqu'ils se seraient mis en route pour Dafôlô, ils ne répondissent à l'appel de personne!

> 2. qu'ils fissent l'impossible pour se mettre dans les bonnes grâces d'une petite vieille femme qu'ils rencontreraient à la rivière, à l'entrée de Dafôlô: la clé de l'énigme du buffle se trouvait en elle!
>
> 3. qu'ils se promissent de choisir comme épouse, après leur victoire sur le buffle, la plus laide des innombrables filles des douze villages de Dô, qui leur seraient présentées par le roi Dô-Samô (40-41).

When they reached Dafôlô, the two hunters obeyed all these instructions. They were kind to the old woman, who turned out to be Dô-Kamissa, the buffalo woman herself. In return for their kindness, Dô-Kamissa empowered them to kill the buffalo. Dô-Kamissa reiterated the soothsayer's condition that the hunters choose Sogolon, the ugly hunchback, as their reward after killing the buffalo. The younger brother, Moké Mussa, finally killed the buffalo, utilizing the three magical agents that the old woman gave him: the distaff, the flatstone, and the egg. When they went to receive their reward, they were asked to choose the most beautiful girl in Dafôlô, instead, they chose Sogolon, the ugly hunchback, as they had been instructed both by the soothsayer and the Buffalo-Woman. Their curious choice was exceedingly ridiculed by the people of Dafôlô so that Moké Mussa and Moké Dantuman left Dafôlô quickly for Manden, taking Sogolon with them.

On the journey, they attempted to consummate their marriage with Sogolon, who rebuffed their advances by using her double, the buffalo. They decided to offer Sogolon to Maghan Kon Fatta, the King of Manding, who was expecting her arrival because their subsequent marriage and resultant birth of an heir to his throne, had all been predicted by a hunter from Dô. When Sogolon married Maghan Kon Fatta she also rejected him at first, as she had the hunters, but when the King threatened to kill her, she submitted and conceived Sundiata.

In comparing Sundiata to other heroes of Western and Oriental epics, Johnson comes to the conclusion that Sundiata scores fairly well in the four lists of Von Hahn, Rank, Raglan and de Vries. Like the birth of other epic heroes, Sundiata's birth was mysterious. A violent storm broke out in the middle of a dry season. He talked at birth and had full teeth as a newborn. His inability to walk is said to be a result of the three totems he inherited, two from his mother, buffalo and panther; and one from his father, the lion. At age ten he demanded an iron rod be made for him, which he then used to support himself and thus walked. His first accomplishment was to uproot a Baobab tree, which he brought to his mother as retribution for all the ridicule she had endured from her co-wife, Fatumata Bérété. Like other epic heroes, Sundiata goes into exile to escape, because his jealous step-mother, Fatumata Bérété, had ordered her son, Dankaran Tuman, to take Sundiata's griot away and, if possible, to kill him. Dankaran Tuman continued to pursue Sundiata in exile, but failed to kill him.

Firstly, Sundiata, his mother, his brothers and sisters, stopped at Badou Djéliba. When Sundiata arrived there, he found that his half-brother, Dankaran Tuman, had already bribed the king of Djéliba Mansa Konkon to kill him. But the king's daughter, Hawa, warned Sundiata in advance and he escaped death. Secondly, they stopped in Tabon but they were pursued there too and were forced to leave. Next they stopped at N'Gumbu where they stayed for a year, but due to Sogolon's illness they proceeded to Mema. In Mema, Sundiata proved himself a great warrior, and subsequently the King of Mema wanted him to stay and inherit his kingdom. Sundiata turned the offer down because he was needed by his people in Niani, to challenge Sumaoro, who had taken over Sundiata's father's kingdom from his half-brother, Dankaran Tuman. When Sundiata arrived in Niani he found that Dankaran Tuman had married off his sister to Sumaoro, in order to appease him. This marriage eventually proved advantageous to Sundiata, because his half-sister, using her feminine charm, discovered the secret of Sumaoro's strength. In this episode the Samson and Delilah motif is clearly recognizable. Sundiata's sister discovered that Sumaoro had sixty three totems and that the white cock was his tana, "tabu". He was forbidden to eat its flesh and its spur would render him vulnerable. When Sundiata finally faced Sumaoro in battle, his knowledge of the secret of Sumaoro's strength enabled him to defeat Sumaoro in battle. He then redistributed power among the small kingdoms and ruled peacefully for years.

Structurally, Le Maître de la parole, like some of the Sundiata epic cycles, opens with the Buffalo-Woman tale which gives the background to the events that led to the birth of Sundiata. Commenting on the episode of the Buffalo-Woman, King states that Laye "devotes more space to the women in the story" (95) than afforded in Niane's version, which demonstrates Laye's concern with the role of women in society. The prominence Laye gives to women, in his literary works, is similar to Ngũgĩ's portrayal of women in most of his novels and plays. In the Buffalo-Woman episode, Laye gives "prominence to Sogolon's point of view" (King 95), by her dramatic arrival in Niani. Sogolon's arrival was first announced by a griot from Dô, who predicted her arrival and consequent marriage to the King of Manden. After her arrival, her wedding was celebrated with pomp and festivities with singing and dancing.

In his study of the Buffalo-Woman tale, Bulman states that the tale is about the aims and achievements of hunters; based on hunter folklore, and that the epic is founded on the hunter folkloric tradition. For instance, the relationship between the old woman and Sogolon reflects the traditional Malinké hunter stereotypes of women, which are incorporated in the hunter's "constitution", the myth of Sanin and Kontron (Bulman 173-174). In Le Maître de la parole Laye explains that Soni and Kontron are the inseparable twin divinities of hunters, who are always in command of the bush, and when they give themselves to a hunter, he never returns empty handed from the chase. Bulman further points out that the Buffalo-Woman tale could be compared with stories, collectively known, about the Hero and Dragon slaying myths of Indo-European and Middle Eastern traditions (177).

In his analysis of the Sundiata epic, on which Le Maître de la parole is based, Bird indicates that the Sundiata epic differs from its European counterparts because of the numerous magical agents utilized by the hero. His observation is that:

> The quest for strange and esoteric knowledge, for the secrets

> underlying an adversary's nya defines the content of Mande heroic literature. The degree to which this theme dominates the literature constitutes a striking contrast between European and Mande epic traditions (18).

Bird maintains that in the Homeric epics and the medieval epics, such as Chanson de Roland, much text is devoted to battle scenes, whereas the Mande epics have no extensive references to warfare and there are few descriptions of physical prowess. Instead, they "show great attention to detail where the particulars of sorcery and its outcome are at issue and where the tokens of power are described" (Bird 19). In addition, the concepts of action and heroic activity in Mande are different from the Western ones because in Mande:

> to act is to have nya "means". Means are initially created by birthright, subsequently enhanced by sorcery and secret knowledge and ultimately bounded by destiny. Once one has the means to act, the actual performance of an act is not of any great consequence, for it follows more or less automatically from attaining the nya (Bird 18-19).

To Bird, the overreliance on magical agents, by the heroes of Mande epics, distinguishes them from the heroes of Western epics, whose heroism usually depends on physical strength. However, Okpewho's close examination of the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, reveals that the heroes in them also depend on supernatural elements. In his study, Okpewho demonstrates that there are:

> numerous cases in Homer when the heroes achieve their feats purely with the aid, solicited or unsolicited, of divinities. Thus Agamemnon ... prays earnestly to Zeus to get his men out of a tight spot ... [similarly] Hektor in the Iliad 6 organizes a propitiation of Athene by the Trojan women, ... to see if the goddess can withdraw her impenetrable support of Diomedes (very much as Sunjata offers a sacrifice to the spirits protecting Kitu Mansa); Hektor is simply making a pious submission to the superior powers who are on the side of his enemy (107-108).

Like Bird, Johnson emphasizes the role of magic in the Sundiata epic. He states that, magic "explains the literary functions of several themes as well as reflecting Mande world-view" (42). The episodes in which magic is utilized include: the vanquishing of the buffalo; the attempt of the hunters to consummate their marriage with Sogolon, when both the hunters and Sogolon use magic to transform into their double; the episode of Sundiata's birth in which Fatumata Bérété attempts to use magic on both Sundiata and his mother; and also in the battle scenes in which both Sundiata and Sumaoro utilize their various magical agents to fight each other.

Apart from the tale and magical elements, Laye also incorporates several songs, both in Malinké and French translations, in Le Maître de la parole. He also makes reference to countless others which he does not transcribe. In reference to the songs, King correctly comments that Laye is utilizing:

> techniques common to traditional oral tales. There are songs in Malinké ... and recitations, genealogies and celebrations of heroes which are undoubtedly close to Babou Condé's own words (92).

For instance, after Moké Dantuman successfully kills the buffalo, Moké Musa sings a praise song for him thus:

Eh! Eh! Eh! s'écria-t-il en chantant:
I bara ké kosson di, la-diya-dô-kala!
I bara ké Sékoun di, bin-na-kassa!
I bara ké todi di, dji-dô-kossô!
I bara ké Wara-sa di, tâ-tâ-kônô!
I bara ké Méléka di, Nigui-tâ-Mansa!
I bara Ke Sounsoun Méléka di, Djina Mansa Kondali Djina Wolosso!
Eh! Eh! Eh!
Tu es devenu scorpion, le-scorpion-piment-de-couchette.
Tu es devenu mouche, la-mouche-vénéneuse-des-herbes.
Tu es devenu crapaud, le-crapaud-empoisonneur-des-eaux.
Tu es devenu aigle, l'aigle-brandisseur-de-braise.
Tu es devenu ange, l'ange-roi-preneur-d'âme.
Tu es devenu ange sounsoun, le-génie-roi, le-génie- maousse (57).

Wedding songs sung during Sogolon's wedding are also included both in Malinké and French. They recall the wedding songs incorporated in Ngũgĩ's Ngaahika

Ndeenda. When Sundiata finally walks, his griot as well as his mother and sister sing praise songs for him.

In addition to the songs, proverbs are also incorporated in the episode in which the two hunters kill the buffalo. Utilizing a number of proverbs, the two hunters characterize their task thus:

> Mais prends garde, sache qu'on ne creuse jamais le trou d'un rat avec un pilon, sinon, on risque de boucher ce trou complètement et de ne pas atteindre le rat (1). Un trou de rat? ... ça se creuse toujours avec la houe! dit Moké Moussa à son cadet Moké Dantouman.
>
> Je sais que lorsque l'oeuf tombe sur la pierre, ou sur la roche, c'est l'oeuf qui casse; lorsque la roche tombe sur l'oeuf, c'est encore pire! dit Moké Dantouman (2).
>
> Quand ta main est dans une bouche pleine de dents, tu dois chatouiller la personne; quand elle rit, tu retires tes doigts intacts. Tu ne dois jamais lui donner un coup de poing à ce moment-là, sinon la bouche se refermera brutalement et les dents trancheront ta main comme un burin, conclut Moké Moussa (3), (45).

In a footnote Laye explains the meaning of the proverbs thus:

> (1) Sache qu'en abusant de la bienveillance d'une personne généreuse, tu risques de la voir tout te refuser.
>
> (2) Lorsqu'une jeune personne a des démêlés avec une personne

> âgée, c'est toujours la jeune personne qui a tort.
>
> (3) Quand ta vie dépend entièrement d'une personne, tu dois user de beaucoup de souplesse et de sagesse pour ne pas la décourager (45).

After taking care of their individual tasks, the brothers reconnected and reiterated these proverbs, in question form:

> -Alors! ... l'oeuf n'est pas tombé sur la roche? dit Moké Moussa dans un rire en revoyant son cadet.
>
> -Non ! la roche non plus n'est pas tombée sur l'oeuf, dit Moké Dantouman en s'esclaffant.
>
> -As-tu bien creusé le trou de rat avec le houe? questionna Moké Moussa.
>
> -Oui ! dit Moké Dantouman en souriant, et même j'ai capturé le rat : il est dans ma gibecière
>
> -As-tu bien chatouillé la personne à la bouche pleine de dents pour retirer tes doigts ? fit Moké Moussa.
>
> -Oui ! je suis revenu avec ma main intacte, dit Moké Dantouman, en riant de plus belle (51).

There is also extensive use of genealogies. In the second episode in Le Maître de la parole, Laye incorporates the genealogy of Bilal Jbunama, who is supposed to be the ancestor of the Mande people. From a literary point of view: "genealogy is ... employed purely as stylistic embellishment by the creative raconteur bent on telling a good story", but "Cosmologically, the genealogies are extremely important because they establish the sanctioned authority and power of the culture hero" (Johnson 1980 : 4). Laye's purpose for incorporating the genealogies are both artistic and didactic. On one hand, he is recording his cultural heritage for posterity, and, on the other hand, the genealogies are part of his building blocks for his narrative. In Laye's text the genealogies not only establish the authority of the culture hero; they also authenticate the cultural institutions such as the ceremony of Konden Diara, which we encountered in L'Enfant noir, the hunters' institution, and also the Coba dance which is performed during circumcision. Moreover, the genealogies are also incorporated because they belong to the oral epic he is recreating.

Transformation from human to animal form, a characteristic feature of folklore, occurs several times in Le Maître de la parole. For instance, Sundiata and Sumaoro changed themselves into birds in order to convey messages to one another before their battle began. Similarly, Dô-Kamissa, the King's sister and her niece Sogolon, on various occasions, transformed themselves into a buffalo, their tana, the 'totem' of their clan. The image of the buffalo is said to be "the most formidable, clever, and dangerous of all animals" and "some hunters are also believed to have the power of transformation into various objects or creatures" (Bulman 174, 175).

Other folkloric elements that Laye incorporates in Le Maître de la parole are repetitions, images drawn from the local environment, and metaphors. For instance, the words 'attendait' and 'entendait' are repeated five times in the following passage to emphasize the hunter's anxiety as he waited for the buffalo to stop bellowing:

> Ce meuglement rauque, il l'attendait et il l'entendait, il n'attendait et n'entendait que lui mais il le surprit, il le perça comme s'il ne l'attendait pas et ne l'entendait pas (57).

In the episode in which Sundiata walks, Sundiata tells his mother three times that he was going to walk. As we indicated earlier, the word "peut-être" is utilized so often in Laye's works that it stands out as Laye's unique stylistic feature, especially in those passages in which there is an intrusion by the authorial voice:

> C'était la première fois que la jeune épouse était venue s'asseoir en face de son vieux mari. Etait-ce la fraîcheur de l'ombre du grand fromager qui l'appelait? Peut-être. Peut-être aussi s'asseyait-elle là pour rien, peut-être y était-elle venue par pur plaisir, et peut-être était-ce pour rappeler au roi, par sa présence, que le moment était arrivé de sevrer la princesse Nâna Triban, maintenant âgée de deux ans (90).

Authorial intrusion is one of the stylistic features of epic recitation. Okpewho calls it "the fundamental realism, the sense of intimacy and of immediacy, in the heroic song" (226-227) According to Okpewho,

> The history of the Mandingo world is so closely linked with the legend of Sunjata that the intelligent bard can easily mine the broad

> field of local customs for details that can help him bring the world of his tale closer to that of his audience. By carefully inserting the explanatory line, he invites his audience to empathize with his tale by recognizing its roots in the familiar society (229).

For an example of a metaphor drawn from the local environment of the Malinké we shall cite the incident in which two hunters chose the ugly Sogolon for a reward and were ridiculed by the people of Dafôlô. Their laughter is likened to a bush fire:

> Ces rire éclataient comme le feu de brousse. Les trois compagnons les entendaient crépiter comme un feu de brousse. Ils entendaient chaque langue de feu crépiter en s'élançant aux hautes herbes et aux feuilles vertes des arbres; et ils les entendaient toutes confondues en un même crépitement multiple et furieusement sonore (65).

During Sogolon's wedding, the procession of singers and dancers is likened to a river and later to a serpent. Like the oral epic from which it is derived, Laye's text also utilizes exaggeration, especially in the battle scenes. The description of the confrontation between the warriors, is reminiscent of the battle scenes in Song of Roland. When Sundiata was still in exile, he helped the King of Mema in battle, and his brave attack of the enemy soldiers is described in exaggerated terms thus:

> Seul Diata, surexcité, sabre au poing et poussant son cri de guerre, se rua avec tant d'impetuosité sur l'ennemi que le roi, ravi mais le souffle coupé, se mit à l'observer avec un regard

> tout aussi admiratif que dubitatif! Le fils de Sogolon frappait furieusement dans tous les sens: son sabre fendait en deux les montagnards qu'il rencontrait, il fendait en deux leurs montures, pour atteindre le sol dans lequel il s'enfoncait comme dans une papaye mûre! Son coursier, encore plus fougueux, renversait ceux des montagnards qui tentaient de s'opposer à sa course folle! Les brigands, pris de panique, durent s'enfuir (190).

Later, in the war against Sumaoro, Sundiata's wild charges against the enemy are described in the manner of Homeric epics:

> Et soudain il s'élança en poussant son cri de guerre, son sabre tiré au clair. Sa cavalerie lui emboîta le pas. La foudre fût tombée aux pieds des Sossos qu'ils n'eussent pas été plus décontenancés. Les sabres maniés avec fureur coupaient les têtes, les sagaies transperçaient les personnes, la mort se rejouissait! (219).

Like a typical epic hero, Sundiata's life is full of wonder. From infancy he went directly into manhood by uprooting a baobab tree at age ten. He was forced, by circumstances, to go into exile, from which he finally returned and regained his kingdom. He received both divine and human aid. His sister used guile to discover the magical strength of Sumaoro, in an episode that is reminiscent of the Samson and Delilah motif.

Although Le Maître de la parole is similar in many ways to Niane's

Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue, it differs from Niane's version in elements of style. For example, unlike Laye's text which begins with a tale, Niane's begins with the griot's proclamation as the bearer of truth:

> I am a griot. It is I, Djeli Mamoudou Kouyaté, son of Bintou Kouyaté and Djeli Kedian Kouyaté, master in the art of eloquence.... we are vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations .... My word is pure and free of all untruth; ... royal griots do not know what lying is (Sundiata 1).

As a historian, Niane puts emphasis on elements of folklore that portray historical facts. He begins his main narrative with Maghan Kon Fatta's encounter with the hunter of Dô, who predicted Sogolon's arrival. Commenting on Niane's presentation of the epic Pageard states:

> D.T. Niane does not merely content himself with faithfully translating into a sober and elegant French the marvellous story of the traditionist griot: he illustrates it with his intimate knowledge of modern Africa.... In this manner his work is that of an historian as well as that of an artist" (53).

Laye's account, on the other hand, begins more dramatically with the tale of the

Buffalo woman of Dô. Sogolon's episode is recounted in greater detail in Laye's text than Niane's, and Le Maître de la parole includes extra women characters, omitted from Niane's text. In addition, the episode in which the young Sundiata first walked is presented more sympathetically in Laye's version than in Niane's. While in Laye's version Sogolon simply wept in frustration with her co-wife's taunts, in Niane's presentation, Sogolon strikes Sundiata. Sogolon's great dignity is also portrayed in Laye's text by her magical strength, her conduct during the journey from Dafôlô to Niane, and the kind of advice she gave Sundiata, telling him that as a future king he should have four plaits in his hair signifying the following precepts: one, he should love his wife but not tell her any secrets, because women do not keep secrets; two, he should remember that a king has no friend, and he is governed by the needs of the state which do not always concur with the people's needs; three, he should remember that a step-son is not one's own, nor another's land; four, a kingdom cannot be run without the co-operation of the old, for the old give the kingdom the fruit of experience, while the young contribute the strength of their muscles. She reiterated this advice before she died.

The fact that Laye represents some of the episodes in greater detail than, for instance, Niane, does not necessarily violate the traditional epic form, as King's criticism seems to imply. Elongating or compacting of certain episodes is a characteristic of oral epics. Le Maître de la parole is Laye's own presentation of the Sundiata epic and, like the griot, he is free to lengthen or shorten any of the episodes. In the episode of Bilal Jbunama, for instance, Laye gives his personal opinion on racial discrimination, pointing out that, it is not the pigmentation of the skin, but rather the flame of hope that illuminates the soul of every believer, that makes all believers brothers in God (The Guardian 69). In this episode Laye also implicitly criticises some of the African people's desire to change their skin colour. Ngũgĩ raises the same criticism in Devil on the Cross against Wariinga who was utilizing certain chemicals to lighten her skin. Although there are a number of similarities between Laye's and Ngũgĩ's regard for the traditional African culture, they have different attitudes towards their various foreign religions. While Laye accepts the Islamic religion as an integral part of Malinké culture, Ngũgĩ constantly castigates the Christian religion for having destroyed the traditional Gĩkũyũ culture.

Laye also presents the narrative in Le Maître de la parole from a contemporary point of view and there are a number of passages that echo his earlier novels, such as L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. Le Maître de la parole is similar in setting to the feudal African Kingdom in Le Regard du roi. Themes that were raised in the early works are also included, for instance, "the importance of the sacred; the mystery of the world, ... the quest to understand and follow the will of God; and the need to be part of a community" (King 93). There are also several references to Laye's own life. Laye presents Sundiata's youth with the same nostalgia that he described his own life in L'Enfant noir; "Oui, dix-huit ans, un moment où la creature humaine s'embrase du méteore le plus lumineux" (232). In the episode in which the king's wife, Fatumata Bérété, reacts angrily because of the king's proposal to marry Sogolon, Laye alludes to his own marital problems when he writes, "A wife never accepts willingly a second woman into her husband's life, even when the Muslim religion permits it" (103).

In addition, we can detect the authorial voice in the commentary on Sundiata's exile: "L'exil, à la vérité, semblait difficilement supportale aux deux garçons, mais ils ne le disaient pas, car leur séjour dans leur propre patrie avait été insupportable à bien des égards" (178). Laye's account of Sundiata's separation from Niani recalls his own departure from Kouroussa, presented in L'Enfant noir; "ils prenaient congé de leur passé même" (175), in Le Maître de la parole, echoes the statement in L'Enfant noir: "as if I was taking leave of the past itself". Likewise, "ils étaient à Badou Djéliba, mais ils n'étaient pas tout à fait à Badou Djéliba : ils étaient toujours à Niani" (Le Maître 177), recalls "I was in Conakry and I was not completely in Conakry. I was still in Kouroussa".

Certain descriptions of characters bring to mind similar character portrayals in the early novels. Dô-Kamissa, in Le Maître de la parole, gives the impression of both youth and extreme age: "Cette façon inattendue de soulever une basine apparemment lourde ... donnait l'impression d'une extrême vigueur, mais apparemment n'était-ce qu'une impression, ... car tout dans la personne de Dô-Kamissa dannait à l'inverse l'impression d'une extrême vieillesse; la première impression pourtant persistait parallèlement à la seconde" (44) which is similar to Clarence's impression of the King's extreme lightness and extreme weight in Le Regard du roi: "yet the first impression lingered with the second". The tenderness Moké Dantuman shows Dô-Kamissa is similar to the scene in L'Enfant noir in which Laye comforts his mother. More importantly, the relationship of Sundiata with his mother in Le Maître de la parole is similar to the tenderness of Laye's relationship with his own mother: "Peut-être aurait-il dû la consoler, mais il ignorait comment elle l'accueillerait : peut-être n'aurait-elle pas été autrement satisfaite d'entendre des paroles de consolation" (Le Maître 153).

Despite these similarities to the earlier novels, there are many more folkloric elements in Le Maître de la parole than in the novels. The griot's techniques far outnumber those of the European novel tradition. Throughout this text, Laye incorporates elements of folklore in his narrative, both in Malinké and French. It is somewhat surprising that King and Hale insist that Le Maître de la parole is structured on the lines of a Western novel, and hard to know to what type of Western novel they are comparing it. Having given all the evidence to show that Le Maître de la parole is closer to the oral epic than to the traditional Western novel, King still concludes that Laye's "narrative technique and psychological analysis [is] more common to the European novel" (94). In any case, the features King identifies as belonging to the European novel, "the realistic fictional technique and psychological analysis", occur also in certain oral narratives, especially in the epic cycles. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, and Ihechukwu clearly illustrate the "psychological probing of character [in epics], and they do not omit exploration of character by action, dialogue, or observation through the minds and comments of other characters" (59). King erroneously concludes that: "It is ... impossible to combine successfully all the genres that Laye was attempting within one work"

(96), placing Le Maître de la parole in the European novel tradition, rather than viewing it within its proper context of African epics. In addition, she complains that "its aims are perhaps too mixed"; that it fits neither in the African traditional oral narratives nor in the modern European novel tradition. She argues that:

> As a transcription of a traditional tale, it is perhaps too modern and literary and as a novel within the European tradition, the narrative contains too many long genealogies, secondary characters and interventions in the plot (96).

Furthermore, she makes the assumption that oral narratives are neither literary nor modern. Her position is clearly contradicted by folklorists such as Johnson, who states that, the epic is "the most complex and celebrated form of oral literature" and it tells "us a great deal about the present" (Johnson 1986 : 6, 7). Biebuyck additionally states:

> [the epic] is perhaps the most fascinating and profound literary achievement of Africa, because of the wealth of cultural information it provides, the richness of language in which it is formulated, the complexity and loftiness of its style, its synthesizing character, and the deep thought patterns it reflects (1972 : 261).

In the light of the above evidence, provided by the scholarly studies of African epics, the literariness of African epics cannot be denied. The literariness of Le Maître de la parole could very well emanate from Babou Condé's oral text. Moreover, incorporation of personal commentary is a characteristic of oral narration. The griots usually add personal opinions to their narrative during performance, for purposes of making their narratives relevant to their contemporary audiences.

Although King characterizes Le Maître de la parole as a "disconcerting amalgam", what is actually disconcerting is her analysis which attempts to force Le Maître de la parole into the European novel tradition where it does not belong. It is hard to explain why King oscillates from deliberately forcing Le Maître de la parole into an European novel tradition, to keeping with the position that it is also modelled after Babou Condé's oral epic. If King had evaluated Le Maître de la parole within the framework of African epics, she would have realized that its amalgamation of various genres is due to the fact that it is a recreation of the Sundiata epic and that epics are usually multi-generic. As Johnson clearly points out, "The multi-generic structure of epic is an important defining characteristic of this form of oral folklore" (1980 : 57). Le Maître de la parole must, therefore, be interpreted within the African epic tradition and not the European novel tradition.

Like King, Hale postulates that Le Maître de la parole is close in style to L'Enfant noir; and differs from Niane's Sundiata text, because Niane's is supposedly flatter and closer in tone to the original than Laye's. This writer wonders to what original text Hale is referring, since, in the oral tradition, it is impossible to identify original texts. Hale's main criticism stems from the fact that Laye did not render his version of the Sundiata epic in poetic form. It should, however, be remembered that some of the variants of the Sundiata epic are usually rendered in prose, and Innes' collection of the Gambian versions of the Sundiata epic validates this fact. Moreover, there are other African epics which are recited both in prose and poetry, and the Mwindo epic is one of the best examples. The "mode of presentation of the [Mwindo] epic has special features.... Song, recitation, and pure narration frequently alternate as part of a single performance" (Biebuyck 1972 : 262). Laye's rendition of the Sundiata epic in prose, therefore, does not necessarily distort the epic.

Johnson's study of the Sundiata epic identifies three modes in which the epic is rendered: the narrative mode; the praise-proverb mode; and the song mode (Johnson 1979: 13). In addition to these modes, he delineates three narrative traits of the Mande epic, "the episode which groups together smaller units of composition, the themes; the three modes of poetry; and smaller units of structure such as narrative lines, motifs, genealogies, and other elements" (33). Johnson further points out that in the actual narration "structural divisions are difficult to isolate" (1986 : 38). We could postulate that in Le Maître de la parole, Laye transcribes the narrative mode in prose, maintaining the song-mode and the proverb-mode in their original structures. In any case, every written rendition of an oral performance is a reconstruction. We cannot, therefore, fault Laye's version of the Sundiata epic just because it is in prose.

Le Maître de la parole is undoubtedly one of the African literary works that is entirely based on an African folkore "without hybridization by the European novel" (Chinweizu et al. 27). According to Laye, the Sundiata epic is essentially artistic. However, it also conveys deeper historical truth. The griot, through exaggeration and repetition, emphasizes significant events, making the audience understand the plot and moral message of his narrative. The griot makes moral judgements; often referring to himself, his own perspective on life, and the authenticity of his sources. As Innes also explains:

> The story is true for the Mandinka at a deeper level than that of a literal historical fact ... true to the facts of the moral and social life of the Mandinka" (30).

In Le Maître de la parole Laye attempts to fulfil the role of the griot in a modern context, and for a modern audience. He portrays Sundiata as an epic hero with virtues and strengths that should be emulated. Like Ngũgĩ, Laye believes that the knowledge of the past is essential to help modern Africa to define its present and future. Through Le Maître de la parole, Laye indirectly attacks Sékou Touré's regime in Guinea. His hope was that a new regime would come to power there and remove Sékou Touré, as Sumaoro, an oppressive leader, had been removed under Sundiata's leadership. Sundiata's leadership was to be emulated, because it had awakened "the collective consciousness of the exasperated peoples of the Savannah to revolt against a tyrant like Soumaoro" (King 91). Like Petals of Blood, which ends with a hope that peasants and workers will be able to overturn the present corrupt political system, and establish "the kingdom of man and woman [in which they will be] joying and loving in creative labour ... (344), at the end of Le Maître de la parole Laye expresses the hope that: Puisse l'exemple de

Soundiata et des siens nous éclairer dans notre marche sur la route lente et difficile de l'évolution africaine! (259).

This ending further reinforces our proposition that Laye recorded the Sundiata epic in order to preserve it for future generations, and also demonstrate that the Malinké, like other African peoples, had a great civilizations in the past. In the process, he hoped to correct some of the misconceptions about African culture that had been perpetuated by others. To Laye, it was essential for African scholars to record their cultural heritage from their own point of view, rather than read it from the point of view of the other, as is usually the case. In this regard, Laye's Le Maître de la parole is a vital contribution to the scholarly study of the Sundiata epic. We are glad that it was not buried in a heap of footnotes as Moore had predicted. Laye is said to have written another autobiographical novel, L'Exil, which could not be published for political reasons. Le Maître de la parole would appear, therefore, to have been a much safer subject through which Laye could recount the pain of his own exile and to express his political ideas.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

LAYE'S AND NGŨGĨ'S SHORT STORIES

In their short stories, Laye and Ngũgĩ address the same themes they dealt with in their novels. Similarly, the folkloric elements are utilized to recreate the past for the benefit of the present and future African societies. Laye's "Les Yeux de la statue", like Le Regard du roi, depicts an ancient African civilization whose grandeur has been destroyed over the centuries. All that is left is a statue of one of the ancient emperors, who seems to be looking at the present with sadness because traditional values have been neglected. As King points out:

> 'Les Yeux de la statue' might be seen as a search for a lost African culture, now abandoned by the younger generation ... The story might also be read as another search, similar to Clarence's, for a divine figure of authority; but the girl's search ends in desolation, not in salvation (61).

Similarly, Ngũgĩ incorporates themes, characters, and plots encountered in the novels, in his collection of short stories, Secret Lives, and in the three children stories in Gĩkũyũ, Njamba Nene na Mbaathĩ Mathagu, Njamba Nene na Cibũ Kĩng'ang'i, and Bathitoora ya Njamba Nene. Commenting on the similarities between the short stories and the novels Ngũgĩ states:

> I think short stories are a form in themselves.... You see, you cannot really separate your moods or your preoccupations if you write in a

> certain period. If you write a short story and then a play and a novel at about the same time, you will find that they tend to be preoccupied with the same kind of things. That's why you find that some of the themes that are in my plays or short stories in a certain period reappear in the novel (qtd. in Killam 73).

According to Ngũgĩ, the stories are part of his creative autobiography, because they touch on ideas and moods that affected him when he was writing the novels. In the Preface to Secret Lives, Ngũgĩ states that his writing is "an attempt to understand [himself] and [his] situation in society and in history".

There are very few folkloric elements utilized in Laye's and Ngũgĩ's short stories, except in Ngũgĩ's recent children stories in Gĩkũyũ. If, however, we keep in mind our broad definition of folklore, we could interpret Laye's and Ngũgĩ's short stories from a folkloric perspective. For that reason, both the intention of the authors and the message they intend to convey through the folkloric elements will be foregrounded. In addition, the short stories will be analyzed from an Afrocentric point of view which emphasizes the functional aspect of literature. Soyinka clearly points out that, "the [African] writer is far more preoccupied with visionary projection of society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature, ... in reality the umblical cord between experience and form has never been severed, no matter how tautly stretched" (64). In any case, every analysis of literary works must of necessity refer back to lived experience, even in the structural analysis that tends to break down literary narratives into segments of constitutive units, cannot stop at this mathematical level. If it did, it

> would be reduced to a sterile game, a divisive algebra, and even the myth ... [to which Levi-Strauss effectively applied the structural analysis], would be bereaved of the function Levi-Strauss himself assigns it, that of making men aware of certain opposition and of tending towards their progressive mediation. To eliminate this reference to the aporias of existence would be to reduce the theory of myth to the necrology of the meaningless discourses of mankind (Ricoeur 87).

We have already established that Laye's and Ngũgĩ's literary works have a meaningful message to convey, subsequently, they do not fall under the "meaningless discourses of mankind" (Ricoeur 87). Laye's 'Les Yeux de statue' could, therefore, be interpreted in several ways: as a parabolic tale of African ancient civilization; as a didactic tale that urges the modern Africans to look to their past and learn from its greatness, for the past is an integral part of our lives from which we cannot escape. In the short story, Laye conveys the same message given in the early novels, that Africa had a glorious past, this glorious past is finally recreated in Le Maître de la parole to underscore its historicity.

Likewise, Ngũgĩ recreates the past in some of his short stories. For instance, in 'Mugumo' the Gĩkũyũ traditional way of life is depicted through the chief protagonist Mukami. Mukami is the youngest wife in a polygamous marriage.

But because she is barren she is brutally battered by her husband and, consequently, she runs away from home and goes to the sacred Mugumo tree where she finds peace and solace. Some of Mukami's experiences in 'Mugumo' are similar to those of the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue'. Like the young woman in Laye's story, Mukami is pulled by a mysterious force towards the sacred tree, the Mugumo. The mysterious forest, in which Mukami is caught up, resembles the bushy path that the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue' travels on to reach the desolate city, and the surreal world of the ancient city, she encounters, is similar to the ghostly world in which Mukami finds herself. Furthermore, both Mukami and the young woman in Laye's story believe that they are being watched. When Mukami was in the middle of the forest, she felt that a thousand eyes were staring at her, and, similarly, the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue' also felt as if the statue was constantly looking at her as she walked through the ruins of the abandoned city. Both women believe that they can hear voices. Mukami thought she could hear "a distant mournful sound" (6), after her invocation of the spirits with the following incantation:

> Oh spirits of the dead, come for me!
> Oh Murumgu, god of Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi,
> Who dwells on high Kerinyaga, yet is everywhere,
> Why don't you release me from misery?
> Dear Mother Earth, why don't you open and swallow me up
> Even as you had swallowed Gumba - the Gumba who

> disappeared under mikongoe roots? (Mugumo 6).

Realizing that she was all alone in the land of ghosts, she screamed because she felt as if something cold and lifeless touched her; and that she was being pushed to and fro by many invisible hands. At this juncture she gave herself up to fate and, collapsing on the ground, she waited to die. As she waited to die, she thought that the whole situation was ironic, because all she wanted was to begin life afresh, "a life of giving and not only receiving" (6). However, when we return to the realistic world in 'Mugumo', the one to one comparison with 'Les Yeux de la statue' ends. Unlike the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue', Mukami's encounter in the land of ghosts was not fatal. Like most folktales, her story had a happy ending. While Mukami was lying down in the ghostly forest waiting to die, she saw, through thunder and lightening, the sacred Mugumo tree and she knew that she would find sanctuary and peace at the altar of Murungu. Standing up she ran towards the Mugumo tree and there laid down and slept "under the protecting arms of God's tree" (7). While she slept, Mukami dreamed that she saw Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi. Mumbi said "I am the maker of a nation": a saying that seemed to awaken Mukami's barren womb. The following morning Mukami found that she was pregnant, and had been for some time. With the hope of the coming baby, Mukami decided to go back to her husband, and the community of her co-wives and their children. The reference to Gĩkũyũ and Mumbi recalls the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin as Killam aptly points out:

> In the association of Gikuyu and Mumbi with Adam and Eve, the occasion

> of the immaculate conception in the arbour of the fig tree, in the language he employs, Ngugi exploits the similarities between Gikuyu and Christian legends and strengthens the points of his story - that strength comes from unity, from a compassionate understanding and from tolerance and co-operation. When these qualities in human relations disappear, the result is social and moral chaos. Drawing on legends from the past to make a comment on the present Ngũgĩ offers implicitly a plea for a return to basic human values. (74-75).

The plea to return to basic human values is made more poignantly in the children stories in Gĩkũyũ, in which Ngũgĩ utilizes a great number of proverbs to underline this need to go back to traditional African values. For example, in Njamba Nene na Mbaathiĩ Mathagu the main character, Njamba Nene, teaches the other children to be self-reliant utilizing the traditional proverbial wisdom he learnt from his mother, Wacũ. In the episode in which the children are involved in a terrible accident, Njamba Nene organizes all the children and shows them how to get out of the forest in which the bus had landed, by working together in unity. To support his argument for the importance of unity, Njamba Nene quotes one of his mother's proverbs: "Maitũ Wacũ oigaga atĩrĩ: kara kĩmwe gĩtiũragaga ndaa, na rũtungu rũmwe rũtiraaragia mwaki" (As my mother Wacũ usually states: one finger cannot kill a louse, and one piece of firewood cannot keep the fire burning for the whole night). Having been schooled in the traditional education, Njamba Nene was able to save the other children from their plight.

In this children's story, Ngũgĩ underscores several points: one, the importance of the traditional African education that includes the study of our environment. Two, we must maintain our cultures by keeping our African names because our foreign names emphasize our cultural alienation. Three, by contrasting Njamba Nene's traditional education and the foreign education of his peers, Ngũgĩ criticizes the colonial education system that hardly prepares our youth for life and which brainwashes them into believing that money is wealth. According to Ngũgĩ, our real wealth is the land as well as the people who can communally work together and produce their basic needs.

Like Ngũgĩ, Laye urges modern Africans to return to their traditional African values through the symbolic tale 'Les Yeux de la statue', and although his suggestion is more implicit than explicit, this sad story reflects the glorious history of Africa's past. To Brench, 'Les Yeux de la statue' is similar to Le Regard du roi. The devices Laye employs in both narratives are the same but in the short story Laye increases:

> the mystification by a deliberate omission of any feature which might localize the situation of the action. Nothing, not even the statue, the old man or the palace, has any distinguishing features. The architecture of the palace, its furnishings, are idealized but formless. It is as though, as with the description of the King's palace at Adrame, Laye wishes to portray the universal and unattainable (24).

Brench overstates his case by trying very hard to divorce Laye's tale from any African reality whatsoever and to relate it to the universal. According to Brench, the ruined city in 'Les Yeux de la statue' "represents an ideal; perfection which has been destroyed by time and by indifference.... There remain only vestiges which the old caretaker conserves and cherishes to the best of his ability" (24). However, the ideal that the young woman and the caretaker want to preserve is the ideal of the traditional African values and not some abstract mystical ideal as Brench's statement implies. "Les Yeux de la statue' is not a mystical tale about the universal, it is tale about the lost traditional values that badly need to be restored. The type of ideal the statue represents is clarified further by Laye's article 'L'Âme de l'Afrique dans sa partie Guinéenne' which Brench quotes as follows:

> Que cet ouvrage contribue à galvaniser les énergies de cette jeunesse; et surtout celles des jeunes poètes et romanciers africains, qui se cherchent, ou qui, déjà se connaissent, pour fair mieux, beaucoup mieux, dans la voie de la restauration totale de notre pensée, de cette pensée qui, pour résister aux épreuves du temps, devra nécessairement puiser sa force dans les vérités historiques de nos civilisations particulières, et dans les réalités africaines.... Pour que la pensée africaine ainsi réintégrée et totalement restaurée soit une force, non aggressive, mais féconde (29).

Laye's desire is to restore "our intellectual thought ... which must of necessity draw its strength from the historical truths of our individual civilizations, and from African reality" (qtd. in Brench 29). Unlike Clarence in Le Regard du roi, the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue' symbolizes Mother Africa. For that reason, she is not seeking for salvation, she is looking for her identity, which she can find only by reconnecting herself to her past history. As Mother Africa, she would like to revitalize the old traditional African values. At the moment, however, there is no one willing to help her with the arduous task of rehabilitating these traditional cultural norms. The statue, which represents that past, sadly looks on as the values of the past are trampled upon both by strangers and citizens.

However, there are recognizable similarities between Le Regard du roi and 'Les Yeux de la statue'. Clarence in Le Regard du roi is taken through the African forest to an ancient kingdom in Africa's past to learn firsthand of its values and redeeming grace portrayed by the radiance of the King. In addition, both narratives are set in unlocated terrain and the descriptions of the halls in the King's palace at Adrame recall the halls in the ruined city. Even though the locality of Le Regard du roi is unspecified, it, nonetheless, portrays a "more varied world-view of traditional Africa than was possible in L'Enfant noir (Soyinka 123). According to Soyinka, "The territory [of Le Regard du roi] remains unlocated, anthropological specificities are ignored; Camara Laye's private mythology fills up the terrain, utilizing credible norms of social relationships" (123). Similarly, in 'Les Yeux de la statue' Laye recreates an ancient African civilization and utilizes "credible norms of social relationship" to convey a feeling of verisimilitude, through the immediacy of the dialogue between the young woman and the old caretaker.

Unlike Brench who believes that there are no distinguishing features of the statue, the old man and the palace, there are, in fact, a number of significant characteristics we could single out. For instance, the eyes of the statue and its supposed mournful cry which are constantly referred to in the story clearly distinguish the statue from the other elements and symbolically link the statue and the young woman together. The palace's great entrances, the golden dishes and rich furnishings, give it its particular characteristics of grandeur. The old caretaker also mentions the fact that he used to have great hair which the invaders have trampled upon and degraded. Through the discussion between the young woman and the caretaker we get a notion of the past grandeur of the palace. The caretaker and the young woman reach a gate which they presume must have been very high, because those who knew the city in its prime say the gate was "an astonishing entrance", and if the gate could be rebuilt it would show its past greatness. While the caretaker and the young woman are pondering on how the past could be reconstructed, suddenly nettles "like a green ocean" begin to beat against the palace and rise up high pursuing the young woman who is attempting to escape. The caretaker disappears from the tale and the woman is destroyed. All these details establish the fact that the ruined city is not simply a symbolic representation of an ideal as Brench would have us believe, but a representation of an ancient African civilzation. Moreover, the young woman and the caretaker symbolize respectively Africa and the guardian of Africa's traditional values.

Furthermore, the young woman's struggle symbolizes the struggle Africa has gone through in the attempt to restore some of its traditional values that colonialism destroyed. In addition, the loneliness of the statue and the woman recall Laye's loneliness in France which is portrayed both in L'Enfant noir and in Dramouss. The nostalgia that Laye felt when he was writing L'Enfant noir can also be felt in this short story. The metaphorical description of the nettles as "un ocean vert qui battait le palais et cherchait à le submerger",[and as] "Un flot qui avait cette trompeuse douceur de feuilles comme satinées, comme veloutées, un flot qui dissimulait ses poisons et sa sournoserie sous la caresse du velours?" (109), underscores the fact that they are symbolic representations of colonialism which destroyed Africa's traditional cultures. Like Ngũgĩ, Laye portrays the deceptive means through which the continent was colonized. Because the story is an allegory about Africa and the destruction of its traditional values, the waves and the nettles that overwhelm the young woman symbolize all the waves of foreign civilizations that, through the ages, have swept across the continent of Africa, destroying its traditional cultures. To underline the destruction of the African continent, the young woman who symbolizes the continent is destroyed. The anger we encountered in Ngũgĩ's novels against foreign invaders of the African continent is similarly conveyed in 'Les Yeux de la statue' by the old caretaker of the ruined city who states: "Vous n'avez pas compris que tous ces visiteurs me marchaient sur la tête et s'essuyaient les pieds sur mes cheveux. J'avais beaucoup de cheveux alors" (108).

Like Ngũgĩ, Laye repeatedly emphasizes the need to look at the past and utilize the positive African values embedded in our past heritage. To Laye, there is a great deal to be learned from our past. Unlike Brench who believes that through this story Laye is demonstrating "the impossibility of ever returning to the ideals of the past" (25), it could be argued that by showing how urgently the young woman searches for the past, Laye indicates how important it is for contemporary Africa to utilize traditional African values to structure their modern societies. In this regard, Laye states that:

> Si l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui ... doit cesser de faire figure de continent consommateur de civilisations uniquement, ... si cette Afrique, ... doit apporter une danse plus rythmée à la ronde universelle à laquelle chaque civilisation particulière porte sa danse propre, c'est notre Tradition orale qui peut le mieux libérer cette danse et ce rythme (Le Maître 13-14).

The young woman's urge to go to the ruined city, is similar to Laye's urgency to search for his own identity through the recreation of ancient African civilization in his literary works, and the reconstruction of the Sundiata epic in Le Maitre de la parole is clearly his best example.

The image of the young woman's splitting skull mirrors the colonial fragmentation of Africa into small regions that can no longer create great peaceful empires like those formulated by the heroic leaders like Sundiata. If we evaluate Laye's short story from an Afrocentric point of view, we could state that Laye does not, at any one point, promote mysticism for its own sake. The mystical in the context of Africa is an integral part of the daily life of African peoples. For "in a culture where the mystical and the visionary are merely areas of reality like any other, the use of such expressions does not connote a higher perception of the imaginative faculty" (Soyinka 65-66).

Most critics would probably differentiate Laye's literary works from Ngũgĩ's because of the emphasis on the mystical in Laye's works. But our analysis of Ngũgĩ's short story, 'Mugumo', clearly illustrates how Ngũgĩ, from time to time, incorporates the mystical powers of traditional African rituals in his short stories. Commenting on the use of mystical forces in Ngũgĩ's short stories Cook and Okenimkpe state: "There is a constant awareness of tradition. 'Mugumo', 'The village Priest' and 'The Black Bird', all subscribe to the existence of occult forces, however ambivalent Joshua's position may be in the second of these" (144). In 'Mugumo' for instance, Mukami is made to experience, through a dream, the creative power of Mumbi: the mother of the Gĩkũyũ nation. The mystery surrounding the Mugumo tree is given "real" spiritual powers that beckons Mukami to its sanctuary in a similar manner that the young woman in 'Les Yeux de la statue' is drawn to the ancient city. Both women are looking for some form of restoration to their past. While Mukami is restored to her past, the young woman in Laye's short story is not, because, as already indicated, she symbolizes the whole continent of Africa and not simply a single individual seeking solace from the past.

There are also other references to the mysterious world in Ngũgĩ's short stories. The story of 'The Black Bird' in part two of Secret Lives demonstrates one aspect of the spiritual forces in the traditional African world. A young educated man, Mangara, is destroyed by a mysterious black bird that had haunted the lives of his family for generations because of a curse that an old seer had put on his grandfather. Mangara decides to offer his own life as an appeasement to the Black Bird. In this story, Ngũgĩ's point of view concurs with Laye's that "il y a plus a plus de choses dans le monde et le ciel, dans les êtres, que nous ne pouvons saisir avec l'intelligence" (Le Maître 17-18) Ngũgĩ makes no attempt to explain the curse and its implications, he simply presents it as is and for clarification quotes the Biblical idea of "the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Secret Lives 33). Quoting from the Bible does not clarify the meaning of the curse because the Bible is also riddled with as much mystery as the legendary story of Mangara and Christian believers are supposed to accept what the Bible says through an act of faith. In this regard, Ngũgĩ, like Laye, emphasizes the spiritual aspect of humanity through his preoccupation with the morality of society.

Although in his later works his philosophical outlook is informed by the dialectics of Marxist materialism, he neither abandons his Christian, nor his traditional African values. In Petals of Blood, for instance, Ngũgĩ uses Munira, the Christian fanatic as a catalyst to get rid of the rich Kenyan tycoons, Kimeria, Chui and Mzigo. The kind of morality Ngũgĩ advocates in his literary works is partly based on the Christian moral principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself". In the two stories at the beginning of Secret Lives, 'Mugumo' and 'And the Rain Came Down', Mukami and Nyokabi both transcend the cruelty in their individual lives and, through love that passeth all understanding, they return to their homes. Nyokabi finds some inner strength that enables her to rescue a stranger's child even though, as a barren woman, she was both bitter and jealous of those women who had children. Commenting on this kind of deep love that was portrayed in the traditional African society Laye states:

> Non! la vie en Afrique ne débouchait pas constamment sur le mystère bien qu'elle fût tout impregnée de mystère; et je dirais même au notre vie d'Africains de Guinée, qui ne doit pas être différente de la vie des autres Africains, débouchait plus fréquemment sur L'AMOUR.... Je parle de cet Amour qui nous unit si étroitement les uns aux autres, ... qui, a la campagne, faisait nos villages si accordés, si paisibles, si solidaires (qtd. in Brench 26).

This is the love that both binds the African masses together and contributes to the peaceful harmony and unity of a traditional African village. It is this same love that Ngũgĩ's two stories, about barrenness, illustrate. Barrenness was devastating for African women because in the traditional African society a woman who had no children had no status. The significance of children was highlighted through the derogative songs that described a barren woman, such as the following song in 'Mugumo':

A thata! A barren woman!
No child to seal the bond between him and her!
No child to dote on, hug or scold!
No child to perpetuate the gone spirits of
Her man's ancestors and her father's blood (4).

The song sums up the importance of children. Children in the traditional society cemented the bond between a husband and a wife and provided for the woman someone to love and to scold. In addition, the children perpetuated the man's clan and ensured the continuity of the man's name for generations to come. It was through the children that the past was linked to the future. In Kenyan folktales a number of stories dramatize the significance of children by demonstrating how barren women went out of their way to adopt mysterious children that had grown out of vegetables. The desperation expressed by Mukami and Nyokabi is, therefore, understandable given the importance of children in the traditional African society. Having no children was almost treated like a crime as the brutality that Mukami receives demonstrates, and which is further augmented by the chant in 'And the Rain Came Down':

A woman without a child, a child,
Must needs feel weary, a-weary.
A woman without a child must lonely be,
So God forgive her! (Secret Lives 10).

In this little chant, God is called upon to forgive a barren woman. It is not surprising that Nyokabi's pain and bitterness grows into a monstrous "Thing" that almost chokes her. Like Mukami, Nyokabi runs away from the "Thing", the reality of her barrenness that leads to ridicule and loneliness, into the forest and there she hears a mysterious voice saying: "Woman, if you stay here, you'll die - the haunted death of a lonely woman" (Secret Lives 11). Adhering to the warning of the mysterious voice, Nyokabi stands up and decides to return home. On her way home a severe rain storm begins and while she is struggling to get home quickly and avoid being drenched by the rain she hears a terrified child crying. Her first reaction is to ignore the child since she has no child of her own, but her feminine instinct is stronger than her bitterness and she decides to save the child. Ngũgĩ, in this story, once more demonstrates how human love triumphs over all odds. For the first time Nyokabi feels the warmth of a human body:

> Nyokabi did not ask anything but took the child in her arms. She tried to protect the child with her body as she began to climb up again, barely able to lift her legs. But, oh, the warmth! The sweet revitalizing warmth that flows from one stream of life into another! Nyokabi's blood thawed and danced in her veins. She gained renewed hope and faith as she went up, treading dangerously over the slippery ground. She cried, 'Let me save him. Give me time, oh Murungu, to save him. Then let me die!' ... her renewed faith in living gave her strength and she was nearing the top when she

> slipped off the ground and fell. She woke up, undaunted, ready for the struggle. What did it matter if the child was not hers? Had the child not given her warmth, a warmth that rekindled her cold heart? So she fought on, the child clinging to her for protection. Literally dragging her legs along, she reached the top. Then the rain stopped (Secret Lives 13).

The emphasis in this story is on human relationships and love, like most Ngũgĩ's literary works. The didactic element is as pronounced as in certain folktales. In 'Gone With the Wind', for example, Ngũgĩ emphasizes the love that the young boy extends to the woman whose children had died of hunger. Ngũgĩ utilizes the popular motif in Kenyan folktales, drought, to highlight the tragic aspect of the woman's poverty, just as he did in Petals of Blood. "In showing the events and in conveying the emotions through the experiences of the child, Ngũgĩ teaches a lesson in tolerance compounded of pity, compassion and love which can only be learned with this force by a child" (Killam 76).

In part two of Secret Lives Ngũgĩ includes stories which deal with colonialism and neo-colonialism. Folkloric elements are alluded to through the portrayal of conflict of culture between the traditional Gĩkũyũ beliefs and the Western civilization. The section is sub-titled 'Fighters and Martyrs' and the characters and their circumstances are reminiscent of the author's novels. The first story in this section, 'The Village Priest', recalls Joshua and Livingstone of The River Between. The episode in the short story is almost identical to the one in the novel. Joshua, the village priest, prays for rain during the drought and fails. But when the rain-maker sacrifices to Murungu, it rains. This coincidental occurrence puts a doubt in Joshua's mind and being convinced that the Gĩkũyũ God on this occasion is stronger than the whiteman's God, he goes to the sacred Mugumo tree to appease the Gĩkũyũ God. While there, he encounters the Gĩkũyũ rain-maker who jeers at him. Ashamed of having doubted the Christian God in whom he believed, he goes home only to meet with Livingstone whom he wanted to avoid at all costs because of his sin. In these circumstances he decides to confess his sin and Livingstone, instead of rebuking him, commends him for having "a broken heart and contrite spirit". By the sincerity of Joshua's confession, Livingstone "[is] sure of a new and stronger follower" and, for that reason, he can afford to show Joshua Christian love and understanding. Joshua is one of those Ngũgĩan characters that illustrates how wholeheartedly some of the Kenyans embraced the Christian religion. In this story and in 'The Black Bird', Ngũgĩ gives an ironic twist to the theme of conflict of cultures. In both stories, the Gĩkũyũ religion is made to triumph over Christianity.

In the 'Black Bird' a Gĩkũyũ medicine man curses Mangara's family because his grandfather destroyed the medicine-man's home claiming that it was evil and satanic. Mangara explains:

> My grandfather was the first of the young converts to the Christian faith brought by the whiteman. The new converts were full of zeal; they came to believe that what was in their people was evil. Every

> custom was a sin. Every belief held by the people was called superstition, the work of the devil. Our God was called the Prince of Darkness. My grandfather and the others like him considered themselves soldiers specially chosen by the Christian God to rescue a lost tribe from eternal damnation. Nothing could harm them. Christ was on their side; and so they went through the hills, treading on the sacred places and throwing away the meat that had been sacrificed to Ngai under the Mugumo. Soldiers of Christ fighting with Satan! (34).

Because of the desacrilization of the medicine-man's home, he pronounces a curse on Mangara's grandfather and the curse holds. Consequently, Mangara's family is haunted by a 'Black Bird' which kills every member of Mangara's family that it encounters. Mangara finally decides to appease the "Black Bird" by sacrificing his life. Ngũgĩ, once more, demonstrates through this story that the past is an integral part of the present and, therefore, we cannot escape from it. Mangara's death finally appeased the angry spirit of Mundu Mugo because when they found his body at the foot of the Mugumo tree:

> His eyes wore a strange look of peace, ... as if he had accomplished a difficult task. The look you sometimes see in the revivalists (38).

Like the other martyrs in Ngũgĩ's literary works, Mangara had accomplished in death what he could not achieve in life.

The remaining stories in this section of Secret Lives contain very few folkloric elements and for that reason we shall discuss them briefly, pointing out the motifs that allude to Gĩkũyũ folklore. In the 'Martyr', for instance, Njoroge foolishly sacrifices his own life because he dared to think of his Memsahib in human terms, making the wrong assumption that his white Memsahib would treat him likewise. Njoroge should have known that in the colonial period Africans were never human, their status was slightly lower than that of the dogs the white man kept. In this regard Killam's comment about Njoroge's murder by Mrs. Hill, in relation to his sacrificing of his life for her sake, is puzzling. According to Killam, when Njoroge thinks of Mrs. Hill in human terms "he seeks to save her; when she thinks of him in human terms she has to kill him" (78). The statement is so ambiguous that one is tempted to conclude that from Mrs. Hill's point of view human beings have to be killed. Through this story Ngũgĩ underlines the strange humaneness that African people showed towards their oppressors, and continue to portray in the post-colonial period. The story is reminiscent of the slave narrative of Olaudah Equiano in which Equiano is prepared to love his slavemaster despite all the brutalities he meets out to him. Similarly, despite his "anger against those with a white skin, those foreign elements that had displaced the true sons of the land from their God-given place ... [which] God had promised Gekoyo ... and his children ... the land [that the whiteman] had ... taken away" (43), Njoroge still decides to save one of the white settlers, Mrs. Hill, from death. Njoroge's love for Mrs. Hill is Christ-like and, like Christ who sacrificed his life for the unloveable sinners, Njoroge loses his life because of a woman who was part and parcel of the oppressive colonial system that denied Njoroge's people their land. The reference to land recalls the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, in which the Gĩkũyũ God gave the land of Kenya to the Agĩkũyũ. As Killam correctly points out "Ngũgĩ is dealing with the pain and shame occasioned by injustice" (78).

In the 'Return' there are no folkloric elements whatsoever. But we can recognize in the short story the outline of the narrative of Gikonyo and Mumbi which is fully developed in A Grain of Wheat. Like Gikonyo, Kamau in the 'Return' comes back from detention to find that his wife is married to his childhood arch-rival, Karanja. At first, Kamau is very bitter, but when he accidentally loses the little bundle that represented the past, he rationalizes his loss and accepts the fact that his wife could not have waited for him.

In 'A Meeting in the Dark' Ngũgĩ, as usual, castigates hypocritical Christianity, but the Biblical elements which are alluded to are not as well integrated into the story as they are in the novels. There is no real good reason why John strangles Wamuhu merely because she is expecting his baby. It is an extreme action to take in order to protect his pretentious Christianity. The last story in Part II deals with the departure of a white couple from Africa and the nostalgia they felt for Kenya. This theme is later expounded upon in A Grain of Wheat in which Ngũgĩ devotes two whole chapters to describe the social life of a number of white characters, the most prominent being John Thompson and his wife. The two unnamed expatriates resemble those in the novels. The unnamed white man in the short story, like Thompson, dreamed of taking part in a great "civilizing mission" which, according to him, has fallen apart. Like Thompson, he had brutalized Africans during the emergency and is constantly haunted in his dreams by the face of his houseboy whom he mercilessly murdered. Ironically, the houseboy he murdered was his wife's lover and when she confesses her secret sin to him, he cannot face this turn of events. He keeps his secret to himself and the ghost of the shamba boy remains to haunt him forever. Ngũgĩ does not understand their ruthlessness, but actually abhors it. His loathing of colonialism and its brutalities is finally revealed in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross in which Ngũgĩ openly condemns the actions of the colonisers alongside their African henchmen.

Real satire is conveyed by the last four stories in Secret Lives, three of which were triggered by an anecdote Ngũgĩ listened to at a bar in Limuru in 1971 when he had just returned from a teaching assignment at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois. Ngũgĩ recounts the anecdote in the Preface to Secret Lives:

> a barmaid had been arrested for stealing money from an aged trader, her one night lover ... [Ngũgĩ] was intrigued by the fact that the girl had returned to the same bar and for a whole day lived in an ostentatious display of wealth, and wellbeing. That was the beginning of the three stories ('Minutes of Glory', 'Wedding at the Cross' and 'A Mercedes Funeral') which were meant to be the first in a series of secret lives.

According to Gitahi-Gititi these three stories "certainly form the foundation

According to Gitahi-Gititi these three stories "certainly form the foundation on which Ngũgĩ constructed Petals of Blood ... Wanja ... combines the character traits of Beatrice and Nyagũthiĩ in 'Minutes of Glory'; J.J.J. in 'A Mercedes Funeral' typifies ... the vulgar nouveau riche we find in Petals of Blood and Ezekiel Waweru is perhaps an amplification of Wariuki in ... 'Wedding at the Cross'" (5). In 'Minutes of Glory' Ngũgĩ contrasts the empty life of prostitutes in the city with the meaningful life of people in the rural area, whose lives are in harmony with the soil. Beatrice, the main character of 'Minutes of Glory', in her moments of disillusionment, thought of her "mother's village in Nyeri" as "the sweetest place on God's earth" (86). In the bar she felt she was:

> among this crowd of lost strangers. [Beatrice] was part of a generation which would never again be one with the soil, the crops, the wind and the moon. Not for them that whispering in dark hedges, not for her that dance and love-making under the glare of the moon, with the hills of Tumu Tumu rising to touch the sky (86).

To Ngũgĩ, the simple life in the rural areas, where people love genuinely and respect life, is much better than the hollow and pretentious life of the city. The people of the city belong to the modern generation which "[is] not awed by the mystery of death, just as it [is] callous to the mystery of life" (86). In this generation women are quick to abort their babies in order to maintain their physical beauty. Ngũgĩ is clearly against this indifference to human life in pursuit of beauty for its own sake. From Ngũgĩ's point of view, the traditional life is better than the decadent modern life.

Ngũgĩ does not develop the story of Beatrice as intensely as he later does in Petals of Blood. This is why most critics of Ngũgĩ's works conclude that the short stories seem like working drafts for the novels. Unlike Beatrice whose dancing at the juke box is merely described as twisting of her hips, in Petals of Blood Wanja's dancing and her feelings are described in detail. In a song with a similar theme to the one Beatrice dances to, Wanja dances with intensity. The narrator in Petals of Blood explains that:

> Wanja suddenly stood up and asked them to play it again. She started dancing to it, alone, in the arena. People were surprised. They watched the gyrations of her body, speaking pleasure and pain, memories and hopes, loss and gain, unfulfilled longing and desire. The band, responding tc the many beating hearts, played with sad maddening intensity as if it were reaching out of her loneliness and solitary struggle. She danced slowly and deliberately toward Munira and he was remembering that time he had seen her dancing to a juke-box at Safari Bar in Kamiritho (278).

In Petals of Blood we can almost see Wanja, and feel her pain. But Beatrice's character in 'Minutes of Glory' is flat. The song she dances to contrasts the village girls with urban girls. Beatrice keeps dancing to many other Kamaru songs, but at the end of the story Ngũgĩ undermines her "minutes of glory" and focuses on her rich lover she had robbed. The point Ngũgĩ wants to make with this ending is that all propertied people belong to the same clan of the "Haves". In his desire to indict the rich, Ngũgĩ makes 'Minutes of Glory' end in an anti-climax. Nyagũthiĩ's weeping at the end completely dampens Beatrice's moment of glory.

Ironically, Christianity plays a role in turning the girls into prostitutes. For instance, "Beatrice's present position is ... attributed to her parents' imposition of a rigid Christian way of life, an indirect result of colonialism" (Robson 82). Throughout the short stories, Christianity is depicted as a negative rather than a positive influence on people's lives. In the "Black Bird", Mangara died as a result of an over-zealous Christian grandfather, who destroyed the Gĩkũyũ medicine-man's home, bringing a curse on his family for generations. Similarly in 'The Meeting in the Dark', John murdered his girl friend to protect his Christian principles. Ngũgĩ repeatedly shows how Christianity in Kenya was a tool for colonizing the people of Kenya.

The role of Christianity in destroying people's lives is most forcefully dramatized in 'Wedding at the Cross'. The story is reminiscent of Kĩgũũnda and Wangeci in Ngaahika Ndeenda who, like Wariuki, are persuaded to marry in the church many years after their traditional marriage. Wariuki, like Kĩgũũnda and Wangeci, wanted to marry in church in order to fit in with the Christian "Wabenzi clan" of Douglas Jones. Instead of Douglas Jones accepting Wariuki as he is, in a Christian manner, he humiliated him and, consequently, planted a vengeful spirit in Wariuki. The humiliation Wariuki suffered, at the hands of Douglas Jones, sent him on an obsessive quest to make money, in order to erase the painful memory of his degradation. Unlike Robson who presents his analysis of this story as if Ngũgĩ was supporting the acculturation of Kenyans into British manners, it should be pointed out that Ngũgĩ categorically castigates the cultural imperialism of the British. Both Douglas Jones and his emulator, Wariuki, alias Dodge Livingstone Jr., are repudiated for aping the British way of life. Although Ngũgĩ's satirical tone is not as sharp in this story as in his novel Devil on the Cross , it is, nonetheless, present.

Through Miriamu's character Ngũgĩ underscores his disapproval of cultural imperialism perpetuated by Christianity. Miriamũ ran away from her rich Christian home and married Wariuki because, in his traditional self, he was a genuine human being. In those days Wariuki sung, with gusto, traditional songs recalling Demi na Mathathi, the legendary heroes of the Agĩkũyũ. The liveliness of the traditional songs attracted Miriamu because they differed from "the mournful church hymns of her father's compound" (101). Miriamu enjoyed the dances in the wood and the genuine love-making on the grass. When Wariuki changed from the sincere human being that he used to be to a wealthy propertied Christian, his actions were motivated more by revenge than the love of God, and Miriamu began praying to God to restore the old Wariuki. Each time they went to Church:

> Miriamu prayed a different prayer, she wanted her man back ... she wanted her real Wariuki back ... It pained her that his singing, his dancing and his easy laughter had ended ... in Church he started

> singing again. Not the tunes that had once captured her soul, but the mournful hymns she knew so well; how sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ears" (105).

The fact that Wariuki joined the church choir and beat the drum, an element that "had been introduced in the Church as a concession of African culture" (105), did not redeem him from his hypocritical image as Dodge W. Livingstone, Jr., for "Miriamu still waited for her Wariuki" (106). In contrast to Wariuki's church, in which "mournful hymns" were sung, the church of the poor, "The Religion of Sorrows":

> sang songs they themselves had created and used drums, guitars, jingles and tambourines, producing a throbbing powerful rhythm that made her want to dance with happiness. Indeed they themselves danced around, waving hands in the air, their faces radiating warmth and assurance, until they reached a state of possession and heightened awareness. Then they would speak in tongues strange and beautiful. They seemed united in a common labour and faith: this was what most impressed Miriamu (107).

Miriamu was attracted by their exuberance, which stirred some hope in her heart and raised her expectation that she, and her husband, "could rescue something from a shattered past" (107). But Miriamu's hopes did not materialize, her husband was "still Dodge W. Livingstone, Jr., senior church elder, and a prosperous farmer and timber merchant" (107). He also attended the same church where there was:

> same joyless hymns, same prayers from set books; same regular visits to brothers and sisters in Christ; the inevitable tea parties and charity auctions to which Livingstone was a conspicuous contributor" (107).

Having made it in the world of propertied Christians, Dodge Livingstone, Jr. was ready to meet his father-in-law, Douglas Jones, and to take his revenge. The vengeful spirit is nicely covered by the Christian clichés of "Praise the Lord" and "God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform" (109). To Miriamu, her husband's Christianity and property made him a corrupt person. He is depicted as being insincere; which is underscored by the plastic roses he bought for their 'Wedding at the Cross'. He hoped their Christian wedding would erase the humiliation he had suffered many years back at the hands of his father-in-law, Douglas Jones; this moment was "sweeter than vengeance" (110). But Miriamu recognized it for what it really was, a charade. What came to her mind was the parable of "Ten Virgins", and she knew that if she went through with the wedding she would be one of the five foolish virgins. She decided, therefore, to reject the display of hypocritical Christianity of her phoney husband, Dodge Livingstone, Jr., alias Wariuki. In any case, she was already married to Wariuki; for that reason she "cannot ... cannot marry Livingstone ... because ... because ... [she has] been married before. [She] is married to ... to ... Wariuki ... and he is dead" (112).

Through Miriamu, Ngũgĩ repudiates the type of colonial Christianity brought to Kenya, which disparaged the traditional values of true human and marital relationships already existing, and placed greater emphasis, instead, on outward displays of piety and the materialistic philosophy identified with Western culture.

'A Mercedes Funeral' opens with a prologue in which the author-narrator gives us the background to the story:

> If you ever find yourself in Ilmorog, don't fail to visit Ilmorog Bar and Restaurant.... It was there one Saturday evening that I sat through an amusing story. Ever heard of a Mercedes Benz Funeral? The narrator, one of those of our dark-suited brothers with a public opinion just protruding, was talking to a group, presumably his visitors, but loudly for all to hear. A little tipsy he probably was; but his voice at times sounded serious and slightly wrought with emotion. I sipped my frothy beer, I am a city man if you want to know, I cocked my ears and soon I was able to gather a few scattered threads; he was talking of someone who had once or recently worked in a Bar (113).

From here we plunge into the main story, told by the second narrator from whom the author picked "the few scattered threads" of this short story. The story is told in the style of Petals of Blood, in which the author's narrative is interwoven with the seemingly live narration of others. A situation of a story within a story is created; and the conversational tone, in which the narratee tells the story, creates a sense of immediacy usually experienced in a folkloric performance. There is the usual digressions of a live performance, "Hey sister ... sister ... these barmaids ... baada ya Kazi jiburudishe na Tusker" (after work relax with a Tusker beer), as the narratee breaks his narrative to beckon the barmaid for more beer. The narratee continues to lay the foundation of Wahinya's story in 'A Mercedes Funeral'. According to the storyteller, "Wahinya's rather rapid progress towards the grave is really the story of our troubled times!" (120). Wahinya's death demonstrated our troubled times; the politicians turned his death into a bizarre competitive display of wealth, to promote their political campaign. Killam correctly observes that:

> The political campaign ... becomes an allegory of the forces in the country which try to feast on the corpse of a dead man whose pitiable life paradoxically is the product of their own political activity" (80).

In addition, Ngũgĩ uses the story to contrast the morally deprived modern society with the traditional one, in which people had greater respect for the dead. The contrast is brought out by the narrator, who explains the differences between then and now:

> Now I don't know if this be true in your area, but in our village funerals had become a society affair, our version of cocktail parties. I mean since Independence. Before 1952, you know before the Emergency, the body would be put away in puzzled silence and tears. People, you see, were awed by death. But they confronted it because they loved life. They asked: what's death? because they

wanted to know what was life! They came to offer sympathy and solidarity to the living and helped in burial. A pit. People took turns to dig it in ritual silence. Then the naked body was lowered into the earth. A little soil was first sprinkled over it. The body, the earth, the soil: what was the difference? Then came the Emergency. Guns on every side. Fathers, mothers, children, cattle, donkeys - all killed, and bodies left in the open for vultures and hyenas. Or mass burial. People became cynical about death: they were really indifferent to life. You today: me tomorrow. Why cry my Lord? Why mourn the dead? There was only one cry: for the victory of the struggle. The rest was silence. What do you think, gentlemen? Shall we ever capture that genuine respect for death in an age where money is more important than life? Today what is left? A showbiz. Status. Even poor people will run into debts to have the death of a relative announced on the radio and funeral arrangements advertised in the newspapers. And gossip, gentlemen, the gossip. How many attended the funeral? How much money was collected? What of the coffin? Was the pit cemented? Plastic flowers: plastic tears. And after a year, every year there is an Ad. addressed to the dead. IN LOVING MEMORY. A YEAR HAS PASSED BUT TO US IT IS JUST LIKE TODAY WHEN YOU SUDDENLY DEPARTED FROM YOUR LOVED ONES WITHOUT LETTING THEM KNOW OF YOUR

> LAST WISH, DEAR, YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A GUIDING STAR, A STAR THAT WILL ALWAYS SHINE, etc., etc. (118).

Once more, like in 'Wedding at the Cross', the emptiness of contemporary life is underlined by "plastic flowers: plastic tears" (118). Although "Ngũgĩ's style", according to Killam, "is unadorned, [and] without subtlety" (81), the conversational tone gives this story an added liveliness lacking in some of the other short stories in Secret Lives. The first person narrative paints a vivid picture of Wahinya's character, and his life as a labourer in an Indian shop. Like everyone else at the eve of Independence, Wahinya had dreams:

> At such times the sack of sugar would feel light on his back, his limbs would acquire renewed strength, he was the giant in the story who could pull mountains by the roots or blow trees into the sky with his rancid breath. Trees, roots, branches and all flew into the sky high, high, no longer trees but feathers carried by the wind. Fly away, bird, little one of the courtyard and come again to gather millet grains in the sand. He would lay down the sack to watch the bird fly into the unknown and no doubt his dreams would also soar even beyond the present sky, his soul's eye would scan hazier and hazier horizons hiding away knowledge of tomorrow (121).

Through his imagination Wahinya transformed himself, in a folkloric manner, into a gigantic figure who could perform miracles. Wahinya's dreams never materialize, for he lived and died in poverty, and then his body was desacralized by the politicians, who used its burial in order to score some political points. Ironically, to the politicians, Wahinya was more important in death than in life.

Through a flashback, Ngũgĩ gives us Wahinya's educational pursuits; his love for African history, the history of "Chaka and Moshoeshoe ... and how they fought the British with stones, spears and bare hands ... and [that of] Waiyaki, the Laibon, Mwanga, the Nandi struggle against the British army" (123), contrasting it with that of the Siriana educated storyteller, who disparaged African history by stating:

> For me now educated at Siriana this was not history. I pitied him really. I wanted to tell him about the true and correct history: the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes and Vikings, William the Conqueror, Drake, Hawkins, Wilberforce, Nelson, Napoleon, and all these real heroes of history (123).

Ngũgĩ's sympathies are with Wahinya, whose interest in African history is deliberately included to contrast the foreign history that is being taught at Siriana. Paradoxically, in modern Kenya it is those who excel in foreign education who are successful. Kenyans like Wahinya often become subjects of tall tales that the rich enjoy narrating over a bottle of beer.

In this tall tale the most outrageous spectacle occurs at Wahinya's funeral, where each of the four political contestants presents the type of coffin in which they think Wahinya should be buried. The competitive display of wealth is reminiscent of the scene in the cave in Devil on the Cross in which the Kenyan _nouveau riche_ boast about the wealth they have stolen from people. Ngũgĩ's satirical tone represented in this tale, is later heightened in the novel. Having no money, the student presents a simple modern coffin and a wooden cross; the farmer gives more money than the student and a wooden coffin decked with pictures of cows; the businessman displays his wealth by presenting a coffin shaped like the Hilton Hotel; and then comes the most grotesque gesture of all. The area M.P., J.J.J., does not bring a coffin but an immaculate black Mercedes Benz 660S. The rich M.P., in mock generosity, presents a Mercedes Benz to a dead Wahinya, whom he did not want to help when he was alive. This gesture is correctly interpreted by the people as an act of indecency:

> But somehow no applause came; not even a murmur of approval. Something had gone wrong, and we all felt it. It was like an elaborate joke that had suddenly misfired. Or as if we had all been witnesses of an indecent act on a public place. The people stood and started moving away as if they did not want to be identified with the indecency. J.J.J., his challengers and a few of their hired followers were left standing by the pit, no doubt wondering what had gone wrong. Suddenly J.J.J. returned to his own car and drove off. The others quickly left (136).

Although the people leave in disgust at the end of the story, the regime of despicable politicians like J.J.J. continues. For any suggestion of change, we have to wait for Ngũgĩ's later novels: _Petals of Blood_, _Devil on the Cross_ and _Matigari_.

In the last story, 'The Mubenzi Tribesman', Ngũgĩ illustrates how capitalism destroys Waruhiu, in whom the village had put their trust and hope for a bright future. According to Robson: "The story is a bold statement against the eroding of traditional customs and personal relationships by affluence" (88). From Robson's point of view, Ngũgĩ's stories are governed by the "life principle" which originates "in Gĩkũyũ traditional religion and concerns the sanctity of life and the presence of ancestors" (88). This is the same life principle that the Gĩkũyũ myths and legends portray.

In Secret Lives, the emphasis on sanctity of life is demonstrated in these various ways: (1) in 'Mugumo', by Mukami's desperate attempt to reach the sacred tree, where, when reached, she realized that it was only in the context of the family and clan that she could be fulfilled; (2) similarly, in 'And the Rain Came' Nyokabi struggled to save the life of a child, which demonstrated that saving human life was more important to her than its bi-products: pain, bitterness, and jealousy; (3) in 'The Black Bird', Mangara desired to preserve his own life, but Mangara's grandfather, blinded by his Christian zeal, destroyed the life of Mundu Mugo, a village seer, the Gĩkũyũ guardian of life, who subsequently transformed himself into a Black Bird. He haunted Mangara's family for generations, until Mangara, driven to his death as the last culprit, appeased the ancestral spirit; (4) the same respect for life is depicted in 'The Return', in which Kamau decided to forget the past and live on; and finally (5) Ngũgĩ contrasts the life respecting characters, in the above stories, with John, in 'A Meeting in the Dark', who destroyed two lives by killing a pregnant woman after he had been assimilated into the foreign culture, thus his alien values are depicted as brutal and destructive. Ngũgĩ also demonstrates the Gĩkũyũ belief in the power of the dead to punish the living for their wrongdoing.

The brutality and decadence of the foreign values that colonialism introduced into the Kenyan society are illustrated by the last four stories in Secret Lives. The life of each main character is destroyed, in one way or another, by the new system. Beatrice, an innocent village girl, in 'Minutes of Glory', becomes a prostitute and finally lands in prison through her attempt to enjoy a few moments of pleasure with her stolen money. In 'Wedding at the Cross', Wariuki's decent life is destroyed by Douglas Jones, who humiliates Wariuki so badly that he finally seeks retribution by becoming as degenerate as Jones. Wariuki's transformation recalls the transformation of Wanja in Petals of Blood. She joined the clan of "Man-eaters", like Kimeria, but, unlike Wariuki, Wanja was redeemed from her corrupt life through fire. There is no redemption for any of the brutalized characters in Secret Lives, this is why Wahinya, in 'A Mercedes Funeral', dies still longing to improve his life, and his impoverished situation is heightened by the disdainful generosity extended to his corpse by the politicians. In this story, Ngũgĩ laments the loss of traditional values, as Laye does in his literary works. Ngũgĩ's lament culminates in the portrayal of the miserable life of Waruhiu, in 'The Mubenzi Tribesman', who fails to live up to the expectations of the new "Wabenzi tribe". Ngũgĩ's short stories portray the "emergence of the Agĩkũyũ society from the pre-colonial period, through the colonial times, to the independent present" (Wanjala 71), highlighting, through folkloric elements, the same concerns he addressed in the novels about the loss of our traditional values and the need to return to those values if we hope to rid our present society of the moral decadence introduced by colonialism and neo-colonialism.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

NGŨGĨ'S PLAYS

Like the novels, Ngũgĩ utilizes folkloric elements in his plays to highlight the same concerns about the problems of colonialism and neo-colonialism and also to portray his social beliefs and worldview. The plays include: The Black Hermit, which was written to commemorate the independence of Uganda in September, 1962. This Time Tomorrow, which consist of three one act plays; The Trial of Dedan Kimathi which Ngũgĩ co-authored with Micere Mugo, and Ngaahika Ndeenda, which he wrote in collaboration with Ngũgĩ wa Mirii. Ngũgĩ's first play, The Black Hermit, was published in 1968 and in the Preface, Ngũgĩ summarizes the concerns he addresses in the play thus:

> I thought then that tribalism was the biggest problem besetting the new East African countries. I, along with my fellow undergraduates, had much faith in the post-colonial governments. We thought they genuinely wanted to involve the masses in the work of reconstruction. After all, weren't the leaders themselves sons and daughters of peasants and workers? All the people had to do was to co-operate. All we had to do was to expose and root out the cantankerous effects of tribalism, racialism and religious factions.

The themes of tribalism, betrayal, and the plight of the urban poor are also dealt with in the three one-act plays, in his anthology This Time Tomorrow.

According to Cook and Okenimkpe, the first two plays in the collection are "in many respects characteristic student playlets written for immediate production" (157). The theme of 'The Rebels' is a variation on the topic of tribalism in The Black Hermit. In 'The Wound in my Heart', the themes of the short story 'The Return' and that of the novel A Grain of Wheat are incorporated. The last play in this one act trilogy is 'This Time Tomorrow', which is set in an urban centre and addresses the problems of shelter for the urban poor. It demonstrates how the government, instead of finding ways of alleviating the problems of the urban poor, intensifies them by destroying their shanty town in order to please foreigners. Ngũgĩ clearly demonstrates in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross, the neo-colonial system is simply interested in pleasing and guarding the wealth of the colonial masters. Like in the novels, "Drama is being moulded by the playwright ... into social protest" (Cook and Okenimkpe 159). This study will demonstrate that, Ngũgĩ utilizes folkloric elements to underscore this social protest. Protest is expressed more strongly through songs, dances and proverbs in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Ngaahika Ndeenda, than in his early plays. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi "is openly didactic.... It celebrates [Kimathi's] recent struggle, and epitomizes in drama his trial and death at the hands of his colonial enemies, as an active challenge to his successors to continue struggling against cynical exploitation" (Cook and Okenimkpe 160). In the case of Ngaahika Ndeenda, the attack against exploitation is carried out by the people themselves. The participation of the people of Kamĩrĩĩthũ in the indictment of an unjust system was facilitated by the Gĩkũyũ language, in which the play was written, and by the opportunity they were given to take part in extending, modifying, and remoulding the original script of the play into an expression of collective rage, hope and commitment. In Detained Ngũgĩ further testifies:

> I saw how people had appropriated the text, improving on the language and episodes and metaphors, so that the play which we finally put on to the fee-paying audience on Sunday, 2 October 1977, was a far cry from the tentative awkward efforts originally put together by Ngũgĩ [wa Mĩriĩ] and myself (78).

It should also be noted that the Kamĩrĩĩthu popular theatre was unlike other popular theatre projects in other parts of Africa such as Laedza Batanani organized by Kidd and Martin Byram in Botswana, and "Hammocks to Bridges" organized by the Department of English, University of Yaounde, Cameroon, which, as Kidd correctly observes:

> often claim(s) to be a tool of protest and struggle and a means of social transformation, but rarely ... challenge the status quo in a significant way ... [and which] often ... become(s) as marginalised as the peasants and workers [they] represent(s) (287),

The Kamĩrĩĩthũ popular theatre was not only organized and controlled by peasants and workers but it voiced "protest against injustice and corruption and champion[ed] ... workers rights and popular expression [turning] it into a major target for official repression" (Kidd 287). The strong element of protest differentiates Ngaahika Ndeenda from all the other popular theatre projects in Africa. Moreover, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ did not have the condescending attitude that most organizers of theatre for development usually have, they recognized the talents and skills that the peasants and workers of Kamĩrĩĩthũ had and gave them the opportunity to contribute their know-how. Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ explains that, "both in development of material and in the process of learning, the Kamirithu project rejected the teacher dependency approach which assumes that peasants and workers lack know-how in matters that deeply affect their lives" (58). To illustrate the patronizing attitude that most organizers of theatre for development have towards the peasants and workers, one example from the report on the Masaka project will suffice. Reporting on the popular theatre project in Masaka, Nigeria, Bappa states that popular theatre should not only aim at propagating ideas but it must "involve its otherwise passive audience in the task of acting, discussing and charting out change" (24) (emphasis added). The authors of Ngaahika Ndeenda did not find their audience passive at all. One suspects that some of the projects are utilizing popular theatre to manipulate the people into accepting new foreign ideas.

In this chapter there will be no comparison between Ngũgĩ's and Laye's works since Laye did not publish any plays.

Beginning with the problems of conflict between the traditional and the modern way of life in the early plays, Ngũgĩ advanced to deal, in the later plays, with the more poignant issues of neo-colonialism and its impact on peasants and workers. On Ngũgĩ's thematic concerns Killam observes:

> Ngũgĩ is consistent in the attention he pays to his basic themes; the more he thinks on the implications of those aspects of the Kenyan experience of the forces of imperialism and colonialism - the more his vision sharpens - the more his invention goes to work on the imaginative presentation.... [On the whole] Ngũgĩ's position has altered very little from the outset of his writing career (Killam 7).

In The Black Hermit, Ngũgĩ utilizes very few folkloric elements. He mostly alludes to elements of folklore through the dramatization of the conflict between Christianity and traditional Gĩkũyũ customs. Like Muthoni in The River Between, Remi is influenced both by Christianity and traditional beliefs and, likewise, he repudiates the meaningless and abstract type of Christianity practised by some of the churches in Kenya. In this regard, he tells his Pastor that:

> You and your religion never did anything for our people. It only divided them and made them weak before the white man (74).

In addition, Remi's assessment of what should be done to develop his community is as misguided as Waiyaki's in The River Between, who thought that education alone would unite the traditionalists and the Christians. Remi assumed that he could lead his society into the modern age simply by shouting political slogans and renouncing everything in the traditional society as backward. Nevertheless, intellectually Remi defined clearly the significance of the tribe and his responsibility to it by explaining to his white girlfriend, Jane, that, unlike her, to whom "tribalism, colonialism, and the tyranny of the tribe and the settler are an abstraction" (47), to him, they were a reality. They had, in fact, made a permanent wound in his soul. Through Remi, Ngũgĩ underlines the fact that The Black Hermit does not deal with some abstract intellectual discourse, but real issues of the Kenyan historical experience. Like Remi, Ngũgĩ has been affected by the Bible and the traditional customs, and, for that reason, he cannot escape from his past and his responsibility to utilize that past for the betterment of his present society.

Folklore is also alluded to through ritualistic prayers offered by the elders before they leave for the city to recall Remi to return and fulfil his responsibility to the tribe, and through the identical horrific dreams of Remi's brother's widow, Thoni, and his mother, Nyobi. In their dreams the two women saw a man with a face of an Irimu, the two-mouthed ogre, which cast an ill-omen on Remi's return. On his return, Remi misinterpreted the significance of the traditional custom of being required to marry his brother's widow, Thoni, and rejected her. Consequently, Thoni committed suicide, fulfilling the prediction in the dreams that, like an ogre, Remi would destroy both Thoni and his society. After her death, Remi realized that Thoni truly loved him and was not just marrying him to fulfil a traditional custom. By overlooking the essential aspects of the African society: human relationships and feelings; and overemphasizing the political problems of his society, Remi failed to comprehend one of the most significant codes in the African society: the family. Through Nyobi's character, Ngũgĩ further explains that African customs did not consist only of elements of ritual, but they also embodied the family, the essence of African traditional customs. The hearthstone in every home represented the love and warmth in human relationships. Furthermore, African traditional culture was not just tribe and customs, but people too, and without the family there would be neither tribe nor customs. Moreover, political fame was like a flame that would burn to ashes; but the fire that emanated from the hearthstone, symbolizing the family's life source, never went out; it endured forever. Remi's misinterpretation of traditional customs was lopsided, because it had been coloured by his foreign education which negatively depicted traditional African customs. By dramatizing these issues in The Black Hermit, Ngũgĩ hoped to correct some of these misconceptions about African culture.

Another folkloric element that Ngũgĩ utilizes in The Black Hermit is song. In the scene in which Remi returns home, the old war songs and the new Mau Mau songs are sung to celebrate his return and to express the people's desire to restore the tribe to its land and its traditional values. The people in Marua village celebrated Remi's return because they regarded him as a saviour, who would save them from the oppressive colonial system and its taxes. Remi, however, did not live up to his people's expectations because, instead of concentrating on the problems of his village, he wanted to unite all the people in his tribe as well as the people of Kenya and Africa, regardless of their beliefs. To the people in Remi's village this plan of action was idealistic and impractical. The songs Remi chose to sing at the political rally underscore his universal philosophy. He first sang the Kenyan national anthem to symbolize national unity, and then the African anthem to represent continental unity. Like the words in the Kenyan national anthem, the unity of the African continent must be governed by Justice, Peace, and Liberty.

Ngũgĩ later reiterates these themes in all his other literary works. For instance, in his latest work Matigari, the main character goes everywhere in the country looking for Justice and Truth. Given the historical context in which The Black Hermit was written, Remi's perception of a united Africa is understandable. At that time, both the politicians and the intellectuals were ready to pursue Pan-Africanism at all costs. In Petals of Blood, Ngũgĩ goes a step further by desiring to unite all the peasants and workers of the world.

Ngũgĩ also employs Biblical symbols and botanical images taken from the Gĩkũyũ environment to characterize both Remi and Thoni. Remi's backsliding is symbolized by an image from the Biblical parable of the Sower, in which one seed is said to have fallen by the wayside. Thoni is likened to a sapling in the drought-stricken land, and to a seedling whose eventual fruit will be a blessing to everybody. Continuing with the same symbolism, Nyobi likened Thoni to a garden needing a gardener, and to Mother Earth needing husbandry, and she, therefore, advised Thoni against committing suicide saying that Remi was not the only tree under whose shadow she could find rest. Thoni, however, disregarded Nyobi's advice and resolved to commit suicide because she did not want to be treated "like a maize plant that has been pulled out and flung out on the bare path. To be trodden under men's feet, and left to wither and dry up in the sun" (66). In folklore trees are usually regarded as phallic symbols and women are often likened to

Mother Earth and her natural rhythms of reproduction. The image of a tree, and Mother Earth, therefore, suitably describe the relationship Remi should have had with Thoni. In The Black Hermit Ngũgĩ denotes that the past cannot be ignored because it is an integral part of the present. In the process of building a modern society, both the African traditional heritage and the colonial legacy of Christianity must be taken into consideration.

In the short play 'The Rebels', Ngũgĩ recreates the theme of tribalism in an almost identical manner to Remi's situation in The Black Hermit, excepting the fact that Remi had chosen a white girl to be his wife. In 'The Rebels', Charles came home from Makerere University with a Ugandan girl as his future bride, but despite her blackness, the tribe rejected her because they had already chosen the Chief's daughter for him as his tribal bride. Faced with this dilemma, he abandoned his Ugandan fiancée and agreed to marry the Chief's daughter. He was too late however, because, like Thoni, the Chief's daughter believing that Charles did not love her but was marrying her to fulfil the tribe's wishes, committed suicide. This tragedy had been predicted by an elder through a dream, just as in The Black Hermit. Nevertheless, Ngũgĩ utilizes the proverb : "Travel and see that it is not only your mother that cooks tasty food" (3), to castigate tribalism and urge the traditionalists to widen their horizons.

The theme of betrayal is the central theme in the third play, 'The Wound in the Heart'. Like Gikonyo in A Grain of Wheat, the victorious, happy Mau Mau detainee, Ruhiu, eagerly returns home to be reunited with his wife, only to find she has given birth to a white man's baby, thereby shattering his high hopes of a happy re-union with his family. His wife, however, commits suicide before Ruhiu has a chance to react. Overwhelmed by her death, he collapses and dies. Unlike Gikonyo, Ruhiu did not betray the Mau Mau oath during his detention; for that reason Ruhiu is portrayed as a Christ-like figure whose sacrifice for the freedom of his country has been betrayed.

The germ of disillusionment with Africa's national independence had already been planted in these early plays. The intensity of this disillusionment was later developed, as already indicated in the analysis of A Grain of Wheat. The character of Ruhiu recalls that of Waiyaki and Kihika, for like them, Ruhiu had mysterious and unfathomable eyes. This image of the mysterious powerful eyes also alludes to Kenyatta who was supposed to have the powerful eyes of a lion. Most critics point out that Ngũgĩ greatly admired Kenyatta at this early period of his writing career. In 'The Wound in the Heart', Ngũgĩ portrays the past as being so significant that without it we cannot face tomorrow. Ruhiu says, "there is no tomorrow without yesterday" (24). His song "This is my victory, this is my song" echoes a Christian hymn implying that Ruhui's sacrificial death would be an example to the future generations. The past is, once again, depicted as being vital to our future development.

'This Time Tomorrow', which was broadcast in 1977 on the BBC African series, deals with the dilemma facing the shanty town dwellers in Nairobi. Ngũgĩ utilizes very few folkloric elements in it. He, however, incorporates Biblical references and the soup sellers's chant, which contribute to the humour in the play. According to Robson, the play "has a dry sense of humour". For instance, the Lord's Prayer is humorously incorporated in the "shanty town ritual of taking morning soup". The third customer for example says: "And forgive us our sins. We are late for our morning soup" (40). Njango, the soup seller, chimes in with her advertising recitation:

> Soup for twenty cents.
> Soup for twenty cents.
> Soup to build your bones (40).

This is a type of humour that Robson believes is rare in Ngũgĩ (119). It is difficult to accept Robson's conclusion here after reading both Devil on the Cross and Ngaahika Ndeenda. In the play, there is a balance between humour and pathos that gives the play dramatic unity. The slum dwellers are portrayed as living in squalor and misery and as being worse off than the birds. Njango points out to Wanjiro, her daughter:

> Remember birds don't have to kill themselves in order to live. And do they need money to buy food? No. Do they have to buy clothes and pay school fees for little brats like you and your brother? (35).

In this dialogue, Ngũgĩ alludes to the Biblical passage from the New Testament in which Jesus admonished his disciples not to be anxious but to trust their Heavenly Father, for he could provide for them in the same manner that he fed the birds and clothed the flowers. Njango's point is contrary to the message

Jesus was passing to his disciples, because in the shanty town the people have everything to be anxious about. The Heavenly Father has not provided manna from heaven: their only provision is the bare bone soup. Ngũgĩ's ironical humour is heightened by The Lord's Prayer in which the Lord is supposed to give them their daily bread. The chaos in the Uhuru market is also likened to the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel which symbolizes the break down in communication and in relationships between people. Ngũgĩ feels that the way out of this discord is to end tribalism. This is why Wanjiro, who belongs to the Gĩkũyũ tribe, opts to run away with Asinjo, who comes from the Luo tribe.

The symbols Ngũgĩ uses in 'This Time Tomorrow' to underscore his message are taken from Kenyan folklore and the Bible. The stereotypical simile Wanjiro employs to describe Asinjo's lips as being "as big as a mountain", highlights the negative attitudinal barriers that segregate various tribes from each other. Wanjiro's mother, Njango, is prejudiced against Asinjo and through ridicule tries to dissuade Wanjiro from marrying him. The exaggeration in the simile is reminiscent of similar augmentations in folklore. In addition, Njango sarcastically describes Asinjo as being "so black - blacker than the soot on [the] pot" (36). These metaphors are drawn from the material culture of the Agĩkũyũ. The aforementioned Lord's prayer and the teaching about the "birds of the air", from the Sermon on the Mount in the Bible, symbolically underscore the poverty of the slum dwellers.

As in 'The Rebels', the stranger raises the people's political consciousness by the following words:

> Friends, remember how we fought the white man! How many of our sons and daughters withered away in detention camps, and in the forests! We fought for land! But where is the land? (47).

The theme of the land and the Mau Mau struggle, which were central issues in the novels, are raised in this early play and fully developed in Ngaahika Ndeenda. In his literary works, Ngũgĩ repeatedly raises the land question in relation to the people's struggle. Did people fight so that they might live in the slums and forever be hounded by police? Is this their reward? The answers to these questions are eventually provided in Petals of Blood: people fought and died so that their children might live a better life. But in 'This Time Tomorrow' as in A Grain of Wheat, the people's hopes and aspirations are betrayed.

Similar to the early novels, Ngũgĩ does not offer any solution to the problems of conflict of cultures in these early plays. It is only in his later plays The Trial of Dedan Kimathi and Ngaahika Ndeenda that he gives clear answers to socio-political problems. The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, unlike The Black Hermit, and the three one act plays in This Time Tomorrow, incorporates many folkloric elements. Ngũgĩ and Mugo collected the information they used for the play through oral interviews. In the Preface to the play they reveal that:

> One day, for instance, we visited Kimathi's birthplace ... with the aim of eliciting a firsthand assessment of Kimathi from the people who had known him as a child, a villager and a guerrilla hero.... Among

> the group that stopped by the roadside to talk to us was a woman, who had once been Kimathi's pupil at Karunaini Independent School, and some four or five older men who had known Kimathi since childhood.... from them we learnt a few factual stories as well as one or two conflicting legends about this great fighter (vi-vii).

Having collected this material their aim was "to reconstruct imaginatively our history, envisioning the world of the Mau Mau and Kimathi in terms of peasants' and workers' struggle before and after constitutional independence" (viii). The authors further emphasize the fact that,

> The play is not a reproduction of the farcical 'trial' at Nyeri. It is rather an imaginative recreation and interpretation of the collective will of the Kenyan peasants and workers in their refusal to break under sixty years of colonial torture and ruthless oppression by the British ruling classes and their continued determination to resist exploitation, oppression and new form of enslavement (viii).

According to Killam, The Trial of Dedan Kimathi is 'a song of praise' for Kimathi and other Kenyan unsung heroes such as Koitalel and Me Kitilili. It is also an attempt to restore the character of Kimathi to its legitimate place in the history of Kenya. In addition, it establishes the connection with the masses in the present struggle by reassessing Kimathi's values. More importantly, it is a self-conscious assertion of the part that literature should play in the revolution (Killam 86). Kenya's revolutionary history, and the role of Mau Mau, and the individuals who actively participated in it, are central issues.

One of the folkloric elements that Ngũgĩ utilizes in the play is the mythical concept of time, whereby,

> time past and time present are made to merge in the continuous present where Kimathi on trial in Nyeri and the mythic Kimathi who stands in the dock in the present tense debate the causes and prosecution of the continuing revolutionary struggle (Killam 87).

Ngũgĩ and Mugo, suggest that "the action should on the whole be seen as breaking the barrier between formal and infinite time, so that the past and the future and present flow into one another" (The Trial 2). Srinivasan correctly comments, this "Temporal confluence is integral to African philosophy and world view. Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo have made this conceptualization of Time an effective vehicle for dissent" in their play (57).

Other folkloric elements that the play utilizes include mime, dancing, drumming, singing, music, Biblical allusions, and references. In addition, the ogre motif is used from time to time to symbolize the oppressive colonial system. There is only one proverb which Kimathi employs in the scene in which he is required to pass judgement on the traitors in his own ranks, for that reason, we shall discuss it first. Instead of Kimathi passing a death sentence on the traitors as delineated in the Mau Mau oath, he elects to forgive all of them. His decision was supported by two reasons: one, his brother Wambararia was one of the traitors, and, therefore, he could not shed his brother's blood, in case it "cried for vengeance from the earth" (72). The statement is an allusion to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel, in which Cain murdered his brother Abel and the blood of Abel cried to God for vengeance (Genesis 4:10). Two, utilizing the Gĩkũyũ proverb, "we shall not give the hyena twice" (78), Kimathi argues that, since the colonial power, which he metaphorically characterizes as the hyena, had already taken the people's land, there was no need to sacrifice the people on its behalf.

Biblical allusions and references are also utilized in the second movement of the play during Kimathi's first spiritual 'trial'. When Shaw Henderson comes to Kimathi's prison cell to try and persuade him to denounce the struggle, Kimathi responds by calling his suggestions "Luring voices of poisonous serpents" (34), alluding to Satan, who, in the Biblical context, is usually cast in the form of a serpent and who is said to be the father of deception. Later when Henderson refers to the game of a rider and a horse, Kimathi categorically states that he would prefer to play the role of Baalam's ass which rejected its rider. In the Biblical story Baalam was thrown off the back of his ass because he had disobeyed God. In his second trial, Kimathi compares the Kenyan politician, who is send to persuade him to denounce the Mau Mau oath, to Judas who betrayed Jesus for a fee of thirty pieces of silver (The Trial 46). Like the politician, the priest goes to Kimathi's cell to persuade him to denounce the struggle. In this scene, Ngũgĩ castigates hypocritical Christianity as he did in Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross. The priest quotes to Kimathi empty clichés from the Bible: "in my father's house are many mansions" (47). When Kimathi attempts to pin him down to comment on the struggle he says "My kingdom is not of this world" (48) and when Kimathi urges him to explain, the priest adds mechanically, "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but the word of God abideth forever" (40). The priest then reads Lamentations, chapter 5, verses 1 to 9, mimicking the way Kimathi read his Bible. The verses directly relate to oppression and exploitation, especially Ecclesiastes, chapter 4, verse 1, which Kimathi reads:

> So I returned, and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no power" (48).

Once again the priest refuses to get the message of the scripture and, instead, hides himself in spiritual abstractions. "These verses are not talking about .... earthly struggle", says the priest, "They are about a spiritual struggle. God and Satan locked in an immortal struggle for the domination of our souls" (49). The priest seems to have forgotten that the Bible is "logos", discourse. Obviously, the priest is being hypocritical since he came to persuade Kimathi to end the struggle in order to preserve the settlers' earthly kingdom. To Kimathi, the priest is simply utilizing the Bible to manipulate the people, because the priest would rather ask the poor to "turn the other cheek" rather than fight back. As already indicated, in the context of colonialism, religion was a confidence trick that the missionaries and their followers used to pacify the peasants and workers for easy exploitation. In this regard, there was no difference between the padre and the settler.

Apart from Biblical references and allusions, Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo utilize songs and music, in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, to structure and enhance the plot, as part of the dialogue, and to comment on the central theme of the play. In addition, songs and music form the background to the mimed scenes which explain the larger African history against which the revolutionary Mau Mau period is interpreted.

In the first movement, for instance, the play opens with loud drumming and when it fades out, the peasants come in singing loudly. "Their voices combine aggression with firm determination" (The Trial 4). The Kiswahili song is about the struggle:

Tutanyakua	- We shall reclaim
Mashamba yetu	- Our lands
Tupiganie	- Fight for
Uhuru Wetu	- Our freedom
Natukomboe	- Free
Elimu yetu	- Our education
Tutanyakua	- Reclaim
Viwanda Vyetu	- Our industries
Utamaduni	- Our heritage
Ni mashamba yetu	- Is our land
Damu na jasho	- Blood and sweat

Zatiririka - Are flowing
Tutakomboa - We shall free
Udongo wetu! - Our soil (4)

This song summarizes the theme of the play, letting the audience know that the play is about the struggle for independence. Music also forms the background to the mimed "Black Man's History" which is divided into four phases: Phase I depicts the beginning of slave trade; Phase II the height of the slave trade; Phase III the colonial period and Phase IV the revolutionary period, characterized by "An angry procession of defiant blacks, chanting anti-imperialist slogans through songs and thunderous shouts" (The Trial 5). The anti-imperialist slogans are intertwined with the revolutionary song which both develops the revolutionary theme of the play, and enhances the plot. The peasants continue to sing other freedom songs such as the following:

Kupigwa na kufungwa jela
Hakutatuzuia sisi wananchi
Kunyakua Uhuru
Na mashamba yetu (6).

Which in translation means:

Beating and imprisonment
Will not stop us, the citizens
To reclaim our freedom
And our land.

Through the songs, the peasants' and the workers' struggle for political freedom and land is openly declared. The intense drum music simply augments its African context. Having been introduced to the theme of the struggle in this opening scene, additional freedom songs are sung throughout the text to underline the nature of the struggle. For instance, in the scene in which the woman is harassed by the soldiers, she sits down after the encounter and sadly sings one of the songs of the struggle in Gĩkũyũ:

> Bururi uyu witu Andu Airu
> Ngai ni aturathimiire
> Na akiuga tutikoima Kuo (14).

which in translation states:

> This our land of Black people
> God gave it to us
> And told us never to leave it.

In addition, the song implies that Kimathi is on trial because he wants to reclaim his people's land from the colonizers. In the third movement, the woman explains Kimathi's role in the struggle and his prowess to the Boy and Girl, and also elaborates some of the legends about Kimathi. Most of these legends are transmitted through song as the woman explains:

> It is here children, that Kimathi could do many things. Even today they sing of the battle of Mathari; the battles he waged in Mount Kenya; the battle of Naivasha. Yes, they sing of the enemy

aeroplanes he brought down with only a rifle! (The Trial 62).

Immediately following this discussion, a scene in Kimathi's guerilla camp is re-enacted and, to reinforce the point the Woman was making about Kimathi's heroic actions, the authors open the scene at "Nyandurua Forest : A Guerrilla Camp" with one of Kimathi's songs. The song is accordingly titled "Rwimbo Rwa Kimathi", which means "Kimathi's song".

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In this song, Ngũgĩ ingeniously incorporates the Biblical symbols of Moses and Christ, both of whom acted in the role of a saviour for the nation of Israel. In Weep Not, Child and A Grain of Wheat, the symbols of Moses and Christ are openly utilized, but in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi the first verse of Kimathi's song simply alludes to Moses going to the mountain to seek strength from God in order to lead the children of Israel out of the wilderness. Similarly, the reference to the cup in the second and third verse alludes to the cup of the blood of Jesus which Jesus asked his disciples to drink. Like Jesus, Kimathi will suffer pain, sorrow and death after which there will be freedom.

The sub-plot of The Woman, The Boy and The Girl, incorporates a theme song which explains how the peasants have been reduced to the menial jobs of hawking fruits and oranges, because their land has been taken away from them. The song also functions as a signature tune that signals the woman's actions. At the same time, it acts as a code which identifies the Woman and the fruitseller, who in the course of the play are merged into one character. Furthermore, it is utilized as a mask behind which the Woman hides in order to carry out her revolutionary activities. Through the character of the Woman and her song, Ngũgĩ gives us a glimpse of the role of women in the Mau Mau struggle.

When we first encounter the song in the first movement, it is the male seller of oranges, who utilizes the song to advertise his oranges. The Man is eventually arrested by the white police officer, Waitina, because of his involvement in the Mau Mau struggle. But since the man is not released, the woman, who is also committed to the struggle, takes up both the man's song and his trade of selling oranges. The next time the song is introduced in the "Second Movement" it is the Woman, "disguised as a man in the red shirt", [who] "is selling oranges from a basket 'he' is carrying" (The Trial 8). In her disguised state she sings:

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The second part of the song, sung in a mixture of Kiswahili and Gĩkũyũ, uses oral antics to advertise the sweetness of the oranges. The elongation of vowels "o" and "u" which the fruitseller employs for emphasis, is a characteristic feature of the oral performance of songs and tales. Note how the exaggeration in Ukimeza, chozi la jimwaga! 'If you swallow, a tear rolls down your cheek', is utilized to emphasize the sweetness of the oranges.

As a symbol of identity, the woman utilizes the song of the fruitseller outside the court room to enable the Boy to identify her as the fruitseller and give her the gun hidden in the loaf of bread, she had given him. The Boy was supposed to give the bread to the fruitseller, and the song was the only sign through which he give the bread to the fruitseller, and the song was the only sign through which he would recognize the fruitseller; for the song had become the fruitseller's signature through which "he" could be identified. In this scene, the song plays a similar role that songs play in folkloric narratives. In most folkltales songs are sung at the point of crisis and, at those moments, the songs are used as a means of sending a message to someone who is supposed to rescue the protagonist out of his/her plight. At times, the songs have hidden messages which the villains cannot decode. In the case of The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, the soldiers, who are regarded as villains by the freedom fighters, have neither the idea that the song has a coded message for the Boy, nor that the bread he is carrying contains a gun which is supposed to be used to rescue Kimathi. However, the Boy does not find the fruitseller, consequently, the Boy and the Girl decide to rescue Kimathi themselves. They arrange to come back disguised as Masai. When they return, they meet the Woman who does not recognize them, at first, because of their disguise. But, when they mention the bread, she immediately recognizes them as the Boy and the Girl to whom she had given the loaf, and whose dispute she had settled earlier. Like the song, the bread acts as an element for recognition.

At this juncture in the play, the Woman, the Boy and Girl, are transformed into symbols. The Woman "now represents all the working mothers talking to their children" as indicated in the stage directions, and the Boy and Girl represent the young people in Kenya who are going to continue the struggle. The symbolic perspective of Woman, Boy and Girl is underlined by the fact that they are not named. The instructions Boy and Girl are receiving from the Woman are, therefore, very important. They represent the informal teaching that young people usually receive in the more traditional societies in Africa. Boy and Girl undergo "a miniature rite of passage" (Magel 244). The process is delineated by the choice of words that the authors utilize. For instance, the Woman in the language of initiation asks the boy:

> "Are you ready to become a man?" (20).

He replies in the affirmative. The woman then repeats the question in the terms of the circumcision ritual:

> "Ready for initiation?" (20).

To which the boy responds positively:

> "Give me any task anywhere" (20).

The initiation ceremony shifts the young people from individualism to collectivism, and metaphorically transforms them from children into adults, altering their behaviour and attitude. They no longer battle with each other for individual gain, but jointly they endanger their lives for a definitive overthrow of the colonial system (Magel 244). The legends about Kimathi inspire the boy and the girl to join the struggle. These legends are utilized in the play to build the character of Kimathi into a supernatural figure. The girl, for instance, has:

> heard of the story of how once [Kimathi] wrote a letter to the Governor. He said he would dine with the Governor at State House. The Governor collected ail the police in Nairobi to come and capture

> Kimathi. But Kimathi went there ... disguised as a European Inspector of Police. Later he wrote another letter to the Governor: Thank you for your dinner last night. And it was signed : F/Marshal D.K. ... [and also heard that Kimathi] could walk for a 100 miles on his belly, [and that] he could mimic any noise of a bird and none could tell the difference, ... they must have caught his shadow (61-62).

In addition, the boy has learned that Kimathi "could turn himself into an aeroplane. And that before an attack on a garrison, he himself would go and blow a bugle from inside. That in the forest, he could laugh and no enemy would hear him" (61). This larger than life portrayal of Kimathi is not surprising since, as already indicated, the whole play is supposed to be a tribute for Kimathi.

Like the characters of the Woman, Boy and Girl, Kimathi is transformed from an ordinary freedom fighter to a collective symbol, in Ricoeur's sense of the word. According to Ricoeur, a symbol " brings together two dimensions ... two universes, of discourse, one linguistic and the other of a non-lingustic order" (53 - 54). On a linguistic level, Kimathi is simply the name of a Kenyan freedom fighter whom the British arrested, tried and hanged. On the non-linguistic level, Kimathi conjures up "a set of associations, ideas, and feelings about Mau Mau which transcends perceptual experience itself ..." (Magel 242). Expounding on Kimathi's symbolic image Magel aptly states:

> [Kimathi] embodies the peasants' armed resistance to British

> colonial oppression; he incorporates their hope for military political expertise; he represents their profound love and respect for nature and land, he personifies the people's need for a fearless, indomitable leader,; ... [Above all he] represents a subtle model of Mau Mau against which the thoughts and actions of the other characters in the play are measured (242).

To Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo, Kimathi is one of the greatest heroic figures of Kenya's history. For that reason, his character is cast in the same mould in which the heroes of African oral epics like Sundiata, Chaka, and Mwindo are framed. He is to the Agĩkũyũ what Sundiata is to the Malinké. Unlike Watene's Kimathi, which, most viewers in Nairobi felt, was a deliberate degradation of Kimathi and the Mau Mau struggle that he represented, Ngũgĩ's and Mugo's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi accentuates Kimathi's heroism and his significant role in the Mau Mau struggle, a struggle Ngũgĩ and Mugo deem as the highlight of Kenya's fight for independence. Ngũgĩ and Mugo were, therefore, not alone in their anger against Watene's play, as Cook and Okenimkpe would like us to believe. The point Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo would like to emphasize, their socialist beliefs notwithstanding, is that, it is time that all Kenyans, regardless of their ideological leanings, recognized the exemplary role that people like Kimathi played in the struggle for independence, and give them a place in the Kenyan historical hall of fame, which they deserve.

Other folkloric elements which are utilized to a limited extent in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi are the ogre motif, the dream motif and linguistic idiosyncrasies which emanate from the indigenous languages of certain characters and which are employed to particularize the characters. The ogre motif, for instance, is utilized to characterize the colonial power. In Kimathi's first "trial", Kimathi refers to Henderson as "imperialist cannibal" who has no power to guarantee his life. Later in the same speech he states that his task is, "To end slavery, exploitation,[and] Modern cannibalism" (36). He, therefore rejects Henderson's admonition saying:

> Out. Rat.
>
> Go back to your masters
>
> and tell them:
>
> Kimathi will never sell Kenya
>
> to the British or to any other
>
> Breed of man-eaters, now or in the years to come (36).

Kimathi refers to the colonials as a "Breed of man-eaters", just as folktales portray ogres as man-eating monsters. During the court proceedings in the Second Movement, Kimathi also alludes to the ogre motif. He takes the word "jungle" from the judge's statement and utilizes it as a metaphor for colonialism and its "creatures of prey" that feed on the blood and carcases of peasants and workers, in a manner that creates a parallelism of ideas usually found in oral poetry:

Judge: I am not talking about the laws of Nyandarua jungle.

Kimathi: The jungle of colonialism? Of exploitation? For it is there that

> you'll find creatures of prey feeding on the blood and bodies of those who toil: those who make the earth yield. Us (26).

Likewise, in his "Third Trial", Kimathi alludes to the cannibalistic characteristic of the ogre, when he asks the politician, "What's the prize, new drinkers of honey from human skulls?" (47). In the same "Third Trial", the ogre motif is implied in the following question that Kimathi asked a white soldier captured by the Mau Mau freedom fighters:

> Did you come all this way
> Many thousands of miles
> Across the sea, over the air,
> To kill our people
> So that Lord So and So
> Might drink other people's
> blood in peace? (64).

Apart from the ogre motif, the authors utilize the dream motif to portray Kimathi's state of mind while he awaits his judgement. During his first trial, Kimathi in a soliloquy discusses his dreams. In the dreams he encounters different places he went to during his childhood. In this hallucinatory state he sees his crazed mother, whose mental silhouette he addresses, attempting to convince it that he was right to choose the path of the struggle. In the various "trials" of Kimathi, the authors portray a strong Kimathi who does not break, even under these dire circumstances in which he sees a pitiful figure of his crazed mother, and who is determined to carry on the struggle to the end.

In The Trial of Dedan Kimathi Ngũgĩ and Mugo utilize Gĩkũyũ, English and Kiswahili to portray certain characters' state of affairs, in the same manner in which the oral artists employ certain speech idiosyncrasies to depict the personality of certain characters in the tales. In the First Movement of the opening scene, African characters use Kiswahili and Gĩkũyũ and Waitina, the white police officer, also uses Kiswahili when he addresses them, as illustrated by the excerpt below:

> WAITINA: Askari! [Soldier]
>
> SECOND SOLDIER: Fande! [Sir]
>
> WAITINA: Line up those Mau Mau villagers two by two.
>
> SECOND SOLDIER: Tayari Bwana![Ready Sir]
>
> WAITINA: March them to the screening ground.He [nodding at First Soldier] can guard the street. And tell him to wake up for Christ's sake! Sikia? [Understand?]
>
> SECOND SOLDIER: Ndio Bwana.[Yes Sir.]

Later Waitina addresses the peasants in Kiswahili thus:

> WAITINA: Leta Karatasi Yako.[Bring your papers.]
>
> FIRST MAN: Sina. [I don't have.]
>
> WAITINA: [kick]: Sina Afande! Rudia! [I don't have Sir! repeat!]

FIRST MAN: Sina Afande.[I don't have Sir.]
WAITINA: Kazi Yako? [What work do you do?]
FIRST MAN: Kulima. [Farming].
WAITINA: Mtu ya Kimathi? [Are you Kimathi's follower?]
FIRST MAN: Hapana [No] (7).

For clarity, I have added the English translation which Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo did not include because they had a Kenyan audience in mind. Likewise, in the same scene, the Mau Mau song which the Woman sings in Gĩkũyũ and the Kiswahili song sang by a crowd of peasants, are not translated.

In Kimathi's second trial language is utilized in a special way to put the Indian speaker in character. The Indian pronunciation of English words is represented in the text thus:

> True! True Dedan. In India-a, ve got our independent. Preedom. To make money. This here our true priend. Not racialism. Leaves your custom alone. You can pray Budha, pray Confucius, pray under trees, pray rocks, vear sari your culture songs dances ve don't mind pripided ve make money priendpriend (39).(Emphasis added).

Note how in the underlined words "w" is pronounced as "v" and "f" as "p". This is the first time Ngũgĩ utilizes different registers to characterize various characters, a feature that appears in Soyinka's plays frequently. The oral artists, similarly, particularize the characters in their oral narratives by portraying the characters' speech idiosyncrasies, through their pronounciation of words.

Repetition is another folkloric element that Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo utilize to emphasize certain key issues in the play. The court trial, for instance, around which the whole play is structured, is repeated three times. Each of these times the charges against Kimathi are reiterated. In addition, the four trials, which constitute Kimathi's period of temptation, recapitulate the same structure in which different emissaries are sent to his cell to persuade him to betray the struggle. In the first trial, Henderson, who is supposed to be a friend of the Africans, attempts to persuade Kimathi to plead guilty in order for his life to be spared. Kimathi categorically turns him down, characterizing his offer as sheer trickery. The request of the emissaries in the second trial is similar to the first, only this time, the characters are three, instead of one, and Henderson is not part of the contingent. They consist of a white banker, an Indian businessman, and an African, who, probably, is also a businessman. Like Henderson, they attempt to persuade Kimathi to give up the struggle utilising economic arguments, but they, too, are turned down. In the third trial, the scene in Kimathi's second trial is duplicated, excepting that the three emissaries are all Africans: a businessman, a politician, and a priest. This time, they combine all three forces from the religious, the business, and the political worlds: "the Bible; the coin; and the gun; holy trinity" as Ngũgĩ usually characterizes them. Nevertheless, they, likewise, fail to convince Kimathi to sell his country for "thirty pieces of silver". In the fourth trial, demands that Kimathi betray his followers but, once more, Kimathi rejects his suggestions. Angered by Kimathi's defiance Henderson orders Kimathi's torture and final execution.

In contrast to Henderson's acrimonious reaction, the Kenyan masses respond to Kimathi's exemplary courage with a celebratory song of victory in Kiswahili, with which the play ends, thus:

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The victory of the peasants and workers was certain, because young people, like the boy in the play, had joined the struggle, putting into action the words the Woman had told the young freedom fighter:

> The day you will understand why your father died: the day you ask yourself whether it was right for him to die so; the day you ask yourself: "What can I do so that another shall not be made to die under grisly circumstances?" that day, my son, you'll become a man (19).

More importantly, the peasants and workers had asked themselves similar questions about the death of Kimathi, and had, subsequently, begun to organize themselves for a new struggle, as intimated by the last song in the play.

In The Trial of Dedan Kimathi folkloric elements are not only utilized for the purposes of portraying Kimathi's heroism, and depicting the past, but for the purposes of projecting the future. The struggle of the past, present and future are all rolled into a single continuum. Above all, folkloric elements are utilized to underscore the political message that Ngũgĩ and Micere Mugo want to convey. Despite the strong political message in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, and Ngũgĩ's and Mugo's call to a revolutionary theatre in the Preface, they had, according to Ngũgĩ, failed to ask the crucial question: in what language the heroic history of the masses should be conveyed.

Ngaahika Ndeenda, which was written in Gĩkũyũ finally solved their problem. The play was published in 1977, seventeen years after Ngũgĩ's involvement in Afro-European literature, and it was not only written in the right language, but it had the right content. Furthermore, the writing of Ngaahika Ndeenda in Gĩkũyũ was Ngũgĩ's "epistemological break" with his past, particularly in the area of theatre, and also "an attempt at a re-connection with the broken roots of African civilization and its traditions of theatre" (Decolonising 42, 44). More importantly, writing in Gĩkũyũ was part of his anti-imperialist struggle and a means of restoring the harmony between all aspects of language: the language of real life; language as speech; and language as a system of signs. This harmonization of all aspects of language would, in turn, restore the Kenyan child to his/her environment. In so doing, the Kenyan children would be able to understand their environment fully and be in a position to change it for their collective good (Decolonising 28). In addition, the peasants contributed to the final text of the play by "improving on the language and episodes and metaphors, so that the play which was finally put onto a fee paying audience on Sunday, October

2, 1977, was a far cry from the tentative awkward efforts originally put together by Ngũgĩ and [Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ]" (Barrel of a Pen 43). The play was part of the cultural activities of the Kamĩrĩĩthũ Community Eduction and Cultural Centre (KECC), and the background to the play's creation is delineated by Ngũgĩ in his prison diary Detained. The production of Ngaahika Ndeenda was thus a collective effort between the two Ngũgĩs and the Kamĩrĩĩthũ peasants.

To Ngũgĩ, writing in African languages is crucial because he is convinced that foreign languages distort the portrayal of African characters. Citing the case of the peasant mother in The Black Hermit, Ngũgĩ points out that her character is distorted because she is made to speak in a poetic language reminiscent in tone to T.S. Eliot. Similarly, the Gĩkũyũ elders, in the same play, speak in impeccable English. Although we are meant to understand that the characters are speaking an African language, this is an illusion because the words are both conceived and spoken in English (Decolonising 43).

Unlike the early plays, Ngaahika Ndeenda does not have this problem of distorting character portrayal because the characters speak in their own language. Furthermore, the play is based on the lives of the ordinary people of Kamĩrĩĩthũ and it is said to be "the most successful use of people's theatre in developing critical consciousness and mobilizing people for collective action" (Byrum and Kidd 9). It is popular theatre par excellence because it "emerged organically from the masses and represents a reappropriation of culture by the people" (Kidd 301). In addition, Ngaahika Ndeenda demonstrates that "when the people themselves participate as actors in their own development and in their own folk culture expressions, tension lessens between the manipulative possibilities of development"(Byrum and Kidd 9). The play is set in contemporary Kenya and its events move backwards and forwards from pre-colonial Kenya to the present. According to Ngũgĩ, Ngaahika Ndeenda "depicts the proletarisation of the peasantry in a neo-colonial society " (Decolonising 44). The plot portrays Kĩgũũnda's poor peasant family, which owns only one and a half acres of land, as having to supplement their subsistence level of living by selling their labour. Their impoverishment is exacerbated by the multi-national consortium of Japanese and Euro-American industrialists and bankers, who, aided by native comprador landlords and businessmen, deprive Kĩgũũnda even of this tiny piece of land. Kĩoi, a rich farmer and former colonial collaborator, achieves the transaction by utilizing religion to swindle Kĩgũũnda out of his small plot. Kĩgũũnda's daughter is also exploited by Kĩoi's son, who, by impregnating her, prevents her from continuing with her education. She begins working at a coffee plantation, where she finally leads a strike against the multinational owner of the coffee plantation. Similarly, the workers organize a strike at the Bata shoe factory.

Numerous folkloric elements are utilized in Ngaahika Ndeenda. They include songs, dances and rituals from the people's common tradition, Mau Mau songs and celebration, Christian hymns and numerous proverbs and proverbial sayings integrated both in the speeches of the characters and in the songs (Cook and Okenimkpe 168). The songs and dances occupy a third of the text. In the traditional African society "song and dance are central to nearly all the rituals celebrating rain, birth, circumcision, marriage, [and] they are [also] an integral part of conversation drinking, and ritual" (Decolonising 45). Ngaahika Ndeenda integrates song and dance in its plot and structure "achieving a complete image of [African] theatre" (Traoré 25). In the play, song and dance arise from the previous episode and project into the next scene, and they are integral to the dialogue and action of the characters.

For instance, in the scene in which Kĩgũũnda and his wife Wangeci are waiting for a visit from their landlord Kĩoi, they recall incidences from their past through a series of songs. The first song they remember is 'Nyangwĩcũ' which they used to dance to in the Kĩneenĩĩ forest before they got married. The song is introduced through their dialogue thus:

> WANGECI: In those days. We used to dance in Kĩneenĩĩ forest.
>
> KĨGŨŨNDA: A dance would cost only twenty-five cents.
>
> WANGECI: In those days there was not a single girl from Ndeiya up to Gĩthĩĩga Who did not die to dance with you.
>
> KĨGŨŨNDA: You too would swing your skirt. Till the guitor player was moved to breaking the strings (I Will Marry 22-23).

The sound of the guitars and other instruments can be heard off stage and

Kĩgũũnda and his wife, as if in recollection, begin dancing to the 'Nyaangwĩcũ' song. As they dance they are joined by other dancers and together they sing and dance the following song:

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In the song, Ngũgĩ incorporates the theme of exploitation and the poor people's protest against it. Kĩgũũnda clearly states that, they refuse to be slaves in their home. As soon as they finish dancing to the first song, Kĩgũũnda's wife introduces the 'Mwomboko' song to which they dance. In the song, the proverb, "Good fortune, unexpected, found Wacũ in the Field" is incorporated. The proverb will be explained a little later, because it is reiterated as a commentary on Kĩgũũnda's expectation of a fortune from Kĩoi's abrupt visit. After the dance, Kĩgũũnda comments on the song and in the process he introduces the theme of the struggle which moves the plot forward by seven years, to the time of Emergency. Kĩgũũnda's reference to the struggle prompts a group of dancers, who enter the stage singing freedom songs. The dancers then leave the stage. Wangeci continues with her dialogue in which she discusses women's participation in the struggle for independence. The mention of women triggers another Mau Mau song. At the end of the song, Kĩgũũnda continues with the dialogue, discussing the period of the Emergency and the events leading up to the coming of independence. The mention of independence signals two other freedom songs and by the time we return to the dialogue, we learn that it is already ten years since independence. Through an alternation of dialogue, song, and dance, the action of the plot moves in time from the pre-colonial period to the present.

Like in the novels, Ngũgĩ utilizes songs to recreate the past. Commenting on this scene Ngũgĩ states: "the past and the future are often recreated through song, dance and mime" (Decolonising 53). The songs also comment on the plight of the peasants and the false hope Kĩgũũnda and Wangeci had in regard to Kĩoi's visit. Kĩgũũnda and his wife hoped that Kĩoi was coming to announce the marriage between his son and their daughter. Their hope is couched in the previously mentioned proverb "Good fortune unexpected, found Wacũ in the field" (25). The proverb is taken from a tale incorporated in Rose Mwangi's Kikuyu

Folktales. In their book, *Gikũyũ Oral Literature*, Kabira and Mutahi explain the meaning of this proverb thus:

> [The proverb] is derived from a story which refers to Wacũ, a co-wife who was hated by her husband. The story goes that Wacũ's husband decided to slaughter a goat for his favoured wife. Wacũ, a very hard working woman was not informed of the feast and therefore was not expected to enjoy any part of it. The man slaughtered and nicely roasted the meat ready to enjoy it with his favourite wife. The man removed the meat from the fire and as he waited for a container in which to carry the juicy meat in his house, a huge hawk descended upon the meat and took off with the 'Ngerima'(The women's special sausage). The man tried to scream and shout but all in vain. However, this Ngerima was too hot for the hawk to carry too far and therefore it dropped it soon after leaving the home compound. The Ngerima just fell in front of Wacũ who was busy tilling her piece of land. Wacũ sat down and peacefully enjoyed the juicy Ngerima all by herself. Hence the proverb *Ciakorire Wacu Mugunda* (37).[Good fortune unexpected, found Wacũ in the field].

Kĩgũũnda and his wife hoped that, like Wacũ, Kĩoi would bring them the unexpected good news of their daughter's marriage. However, for Kĩgũũnda and his wife the Wacũ-like fortune did not materialize. Kĩgũũnda's life is depicted as having been better in the past when he participated in the Mau Mau war of independence.

Ngũgĩ utilizes the Mau Mau songs to praise freedom fighters, like Kĩgũũnda, for their contribution in bringing about Kenya's independence. Kĩgũũnda's heroic deeds are contrasted with his impoverished state, emphasizing the betrayal of the masses by the comprador bourgeoisie, like Kĩoi. The bitterness of the masses is conveyed by Wangeci in her cynical comments to Kĩgũũnda, which recalls Abdalla's sneers at Nding'uri's ghost in Petals of Blood. Wangeci sneeringly asks Kĩgũũnda:

> Who prevented you from selling out?
>
> Today we would be seeing you
>
> In different models of Mercedez Benzes
>
> With stolen herds of cows and sheep (13).

To Wangeci's chiding, Kĩgũũnda responds defiantly with a circumcision song, stating that this is his home and he has the freedom to do whatever he likes within its confines. After all, it is the poor, like him, who contribute to the wealth of people like Kĩoi. Ngũgĩ constantly points out in this play that the wealth of the rich comes from the sweat of the peasants and workers. Gĩcaamba emphasizes the point about the exploitation of the poor by singing a lengthy song of how peasants and workers create wealth for the rich. In the song, Ngũgĩ incorporates an aspect of the people's protest against exploitation and oppression. As the song states:

Poverty! Poverty!
Nobody can govern over poverty
For poverty is like poison in a body.
Exploitation and oppression
Have poisoned our land (42).

The idea of oppression is then intensified by Ngũgĩ bringing onto the scene the representatives of oppression, Ahab Kĩoi, his wife Jezebel, and their two followers Samuel and Helen Ndugĩre. One of the best satires on the hypocritical Christianity in Kenya is presented in this scene. The Kĩois and the Ndugĩres believe that their wealth comes from God and all that is required of Kĩgũũnda is to stop complaining and trust in God. He should emulate Kĩoi's tractor driver who never complained because he was a good Christian, and, as a good Christian, he was content with his poverty. Kĩoi's wife explains:

He does not argue back.
He does not demand higher wages.
He just believes in hard work,
Praising our Lord all the time.
He is a true brother-in-Christ (44).

Ngũgĩ always repudiates this type of Christianity that is used to exploit the masses. The names Ahab and Jezebel which belong to two Biblical characters that disobeyed God, are deliberately utilized to symbolize the hypocritical Christianity practised by the Kĩois. As Srinivasan correctly observes, "Ngũgĩ has been painfully aware of the way Christianity has been used as an instrument of oppression both by the British imperialists in the past and black capitalists in the present" (55). Ndugĩre's testimony is, therefore, both humorous and ludicrous. But since a testimony is a type of oral performance, its impact can only be fully appreciated in its live presentation in Gĩkũyũ. In its written form in English, it loses some of its sarcasm conveyed by the tonality of the Gĩkũyũ. In addition, a familiarity with the fundamental Christianity in Kenya would further illuminate the irony behind the testimony. Ndugĩre's testimony is similar to the self-praise of the corrupt comprador-bourgeoisie in Devil on the Cross. Like the testimony of the "thieves and robbers" at the Devil's Feast, Ndugĩre's testimony enumerates the crimes he committed against Kenyan freedom fighters. Among the "saved" Christians in Kenya it is the person with the most and the worst sins that is usually regarded to be the most holy. In this context, the testimony becomes a kind of "self-praise" for the sinner. The sinner is proud of the fact that having committed such great sins, he is, nonetheless, forgiven and cleansed by the blood of the lamb. Ndugĩre is such a Christian and his testimony is ironical because he is narrating the crimes he committed against the freedom fighters, to Kĩgũũnda, who was a freedom fighter himself. The testimony is, therefore, as audacious as that of the corrupt élite in Devil on the Cross. The Christian hymns that intersperse Ndugĩre's testimony reinforce the hollowness of his Christian message, when juxtaposed with Kĩgũũnda's poverty. Kĩgũũnda is, therefore, justified to chase the Kĩois and Ndugĩres out of his house, because their Christianity is merely a smoke screen for exploitation. Similarly, the Christian message of the church of poverty is as hypocritical as Ndugĩre's testimony, for they too, are utilizing Christianity as a means of exploiting the poor. Their repetitive Christian song about crushing the devil is a mockery and Kĩgũũnda is, likewise, vindicated in evicting them out of his house.

In his indictment of the hypocrisy of Christian religions in Kenya, Ngũgĩ does not spare any of the Christian denominations. He believes that all the Christian religions are involved in the exploitation of peasants and workers in Kenya. This is further heightened through the Christian hymns that Gĩcaamba sings in Act Two, Scene One. Gĩcaamba repudiates the Christian religion, emphasizing its foreign element. Song and dialogue alternate throughout this scene. For instance, people are told to:

> Hold fast unto the rosary,
>
> Enter the church,
>
> Lift up your eyes unto the Heavens (58).

This perspective is reinforced by the Christian hymns they sing thus:

> Believe in God
>
> And He'll take care of all your problems,
>
> He will show you all good things
>
> And remove all the evils from you
>
> Through Jesus you will get your share in Heaven
>
> Believe in God

Believe in God
Believe in God
And trust in Him (58).

The hypocritical Christianity is contrasted with the heroic resistance of the freedom fighters like Patriot-Son of Njeeri. His act of bravery is similar to that of Nyakinyua's husband Njamba Nene in Petals of Blood. Like Njamba Nene, Wa-Njeeri was caught and hanged after his gun jammed. To praise his patriotism the Mau Mau song is sung, and immediately after the Mau Mau song, the Christian hymn is sung to underline the role of Christianity in the exploitation of the poor. Ngũgĩ and Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ heap irony upon irony by taking us through different Christian lyrics. For example, through one of the hymns the poor are told:

Drink Jesus and he'll quench your thirst
For the earthly water is bitter (60).

Gĩcaamba expresses the anger of the poor through the following rhetorical question which implies that, if the poor are supposed to rest their souls in Jesus:

The Kĩois of this earth
Where do they rest their souls? (61)

From the play, we could deduce the answer: the Kĩois of this earth rest their souls in the property they have stolen from the poor. The songs both reinforce the action of the play and heighten the message.

Another folkloric element that the two Ngũgĩs utilize in Ngaahika Ndeenda is the Gĩkũyũ traditional marriage ceremony, Ngurario with its songs and dances.

According to Cook and Okenimkpe, the two authors:

> Make full advantage of their dramatic form to recreate the actuality of a traditional communalism. The wholehearted togetherness of the time honoured village marriage ceremony [and] the idealism of Mau Mau camaraderie is brought live to the stage (168).

The traditional communal ethic is contrasted with the decadent individualism of the comprador-bourgeoisie, like the Kïoi̇s. Both the marriage ceremony and the commitment to the struggle are depicted as arising out of the same communal spirit and solidarity. The Aagaciku clan joyfully sing during the marriage ceremony:

> Here is the millet gruel, woman of the Mbui clan,
> You who knows how to welcome guests!
> Now hand me my honey
> And my ear-rings and tobacco
> For the beautiful one from the Njiku clan,
> As for you the beautiful one from the Mbui clan,
> I have got your yam,
> And a crop of ripened bananas (66).

The patriots, similarly, express their communal spirit in their oath:

> I will always help this organization,
> With all my strength and property,
> I'll help members of this organization,
> So that if a bean falls to the ground

We split it amongst ourselves (69).

In addition, song and dance are utilized to illustrate how the injustices of the colonial period are continued in neo-colonial Kenya. Commenting on the content of Ngaahika Ndeenda Ngũgĩ states:

> [the play] looks at the Kenyan history of struggle against imperialism with pride, delineating the traitorous role of those who sold out and the heroic role of those that held out; [it] correctly reflects the true social conditions in Kenya today, especially in its comparative depiction of the styles of life of the 'privileged' thieving minority and the labouring majority (Detained 188).

Apart from song and dance, the authors utilize proverbs to reinforce their political message. Most of the proverbs they employ in Ngaahika Ndeenda can be found in Ngumbu Njururi's Gĩkũyũ Proverbs and Barra's A Thousand Gĩkũyũ Proverbs. The skilful utilization of the Gĩkũyũ proverbs in the play demonstrates the fact that Ngũgĩ and his colleague are well versed in their oral tradition and like the griot, they utilize proverbs to embellish their narrative. The proverbs are ingeniously woven in the characters' dialogue and songs. There are about forty proverbs which are employed in different contexts to comment on the actions of various characters and to underscore the message of the play. It should be remembered that, in the African context, proverbs are not dead clichés but metaphors that add vivacity and freshness to the situation to which they are applied. As "metaphors [they] tell us something new about reality" (Ricoeur 53).

In the opening scene, Wangeci chides Kĩgũũnda for merely complaining about his poverty, while doing nothing to alleviate it. Kĩgũũnda's character is summed up by the following proverb: "A fool's stick supports the clever" (15). Wangeci likens Kĩgũũnda to a fool's stick which supports the clever, because he was foolish enough not to sell out like the Kĩois and the Ndugĩres. Ngũgĩ's satirical tone is reinforced by Wangeci's taunting cynicism:

> You'll keep on singing the same song
> Till the day you people wake up.
> A fool's walking stick supports the clever(15).

In the dialogue between Wangeci and Kĩgũũnda proverbs are utilized to clarify their points of view on certain issues. In these dialogical context the proverbs are indeed "the palm oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe viii). In Act One, Kĩgũũnda and his wife decide to make some food for their honourable guests, the Kĩois. However, when Kĩgũũnda tells his wife that he does not have enough money to buy food for the Kĩois, Wangeci is sceptical and Kĩgũũnda utilizes the following proverb to criticize her scepticism : "The given does not know when the granary is empty" (18). Being on the receiving end, Wangeci expects Kĩgũũnda to have money even when he has none. In rebuttal, Wangeci reprimands Kĩgũũnda for being unprepared to receive the Kĩois through the proverb: "He who puts on dancing finery knows how he is going to dance in the arena" (18). The similarity between colonialism and neo-colonialism is summed up in the proverb: "I ran away from coldland only to find myself in frostland" (19).

In both systems, the poor are like the pot that cooks and never tastes the food as expressed in the next proverb in question form, "Are we the pot that cooks without eating?" (20). Ngũgĩ believes that both the colonial and neo-colonial ruling classes used deception to steal the wealth of the peasants and workers, and the key instrument they employed to deceive them was the Bible. This belief is conveyed through Gĩcaamba who categorically states:

> When the British came here in 1895,
> All the missionaries of all churches
> Held the Bible in the left hand,
> And the gun in the right hand
> The white man wanted us
> To be drunk with religion
> While he,
> In the meantime
> Was mapping and grabbing our land (57).

The next proverb underscores how the poverty of the poor is maintained through guile:

> If you want to rob a monkey of a baby it is holding
> You must first throw it a handful of peanuts (33).

In a cautionary proverb Njooki warns Gĩcaamba to beware because:

> It hates less he who sights it
> Than he who shouts its presence (40).

This proverb is also utilized in the Devil on the Cross to portray the culture of silence that the oppressive neo-colonial system is fostering. Wangeci reinforces Njooki's philosophy of self-preservation by another proverb that states: "Dwellers in the land of silence were saved by silence" (41). But Kĩgũũnda rejects this culture of fear, using a proverb that expresses a philosophy antithetical to theirs thus:

> Discussion breeds ideas
> Discussion breeds love (41).

In any case, a free country should have freedom of speech so that each individual can express themselves freely without fear. The desire for individual freedom is conveyed through the following proverbs:

> Every home has its own head.
> A man brags about his penis however small.
> A poor house, but mine!

Ngũgĩ posits that a country should create the kind of political system which protects the dignity of every individual in society. Ngũgĩ's demand for justice for all has often been characterized as utopian. Eustace Palmer, in his analysis of Petals of Blood, goes as far as regarding the cut-throat competitive individualism that Ngũgĩ castigates in the novel, to be a criterion for an "adult world". To Ngũgĩ, on the contrary, blatant exploitation of other people through corrupt means is not a sign of maturity, but immorality. The adults in the society should, therefore, recognize this immorality and dismantle the system that perpetuates it.

According to Ngũgĩ, the corrupt system that was inaugurated during the colonial period has never changed. Its continuity is depicted by the proverbs that Gĩcaamba quotes thus:

> Did the leopard ever change its spots?
> A kid steals like its mother.
> The chameleon family
> has never changed its backridge (59).

For that reason, Kĩgũũnda is warned to steer clear of the corrupt system even when it comes with a religious mask. The warning is conveyed in the following proverbs:

> No one regrets the going as returning.
> Take care you don't lose four
> While running after eight (62).

Kĩgũũnda, being more naive than Gĩcaamba, does not listen to the wisdom in the proverbs and, consequently, he loses everything he owns, or as figuratively expressed by one of the proverbs, Kĩgũũnda loses "four while he is running after eight". Kĩgũũnda's fate acts as a warning to all peasants and workers who might be tempted to emulate the unscrupulous methods of the comprador bourgeoisie.

Another folkloric element that the two Ngũgĩs employ in Ngaahika Ndeenda is repetition. For instance, repetition is utilized to underscore the role of the church in the exploitation of the masses. It is outlined in Act I by Kĩgũũnda and reiterated by Gĩcaamba in Act II, emphasizing the churches' foreign origin:

All the churches that now sit on us
Were brought here by the whites
P.C.E.A. belongs to Scottish Protestants
The Anglican church belongs to the English
The orthodox belongs to the Americans
[They all] tell us we should give them
a tenth of all we produce (56).

Tithing and Harambee fund raising by the church are all regarded as exploitation of the poor, and both are similarly condemned.

In the oath taking ritual, repetition is employed to heighten the solidarity of the peasants and workers and their commitment to their struggle. Through incantation, the group reiterates the vows that their leader utters including the refrain:

May this, the people's oath, destroy me.
And the blood of the masses turn against me.

Certain proverbs are also reiterated several times in different contexts, and in their new contexts they acquire new meanings. The proverb Wangeci utilizes at the beginning of the play, "A fool's stick supports the clever", to criticize Kĩgũũnda for not selling out, is later used by Gĩcaamba in a different context expressing a meaning antithetical to Wangeci's. From Gĩcaamba's perspective "A fool's walking stick supports the clever", because the poor do not understand the nature of their exploitation. In their ignorance, the poor are unable to see the trickery the rich utilize in order to steal their wealth. The peasants and workers are, therefore, urged to open their eyes and see how they are being exploited by the rich and do something about it.

Both Wangeci and Gĩcaamba support their point of view with additional proverbs. Wangeci backs up her practical proposition with these proverbs:

The burdens of the masses
Are tied with a cord easy to cut
Or carried in a basket
full of holes (73).

Wangeci's philosophy is similar to Wanja's in Petals of Blood "You eat or you are eaten", or as the English cliché states, "If you cannot beat them, join them". But, when the Kĩgũũndas finally put this philosophy into practice they lose everything. For "in aping the false values of a hypocritical Christianity and bourgeois materialism, the Kĩgũũndas suffer the repercussions of their misguided actions" (Cook and Okenimkpe 172). In so doing, they fulfil the truism in the proverb "A fool's walking stick supports the clever".

Unlike the Kĩgũũndas, Gĩcaamba, has a better understanding of the philosophy of exploitation and its tools of deception. The methods the exploiters use are depicted in the following proverbs that Gĩcaamba utilizes to warn Kĩgũũnda:

> If you want to rob a monkey of a baby it is holding
>
> You must first throw it a handful of peanuts (33).

He later reiterates the same proverb with a slight variation:

> A handful of peanuts is thrown to a monkey
>
> When the baby it is carrying is about to be stolen! (37).

Gĩcaamba augments his proposition with additional proverbs thus:

> For although Gĩkũyũ once said
>
> That nobody ever repents another man's sins
>
> Yet a leader who never listens
>
> Is not a leader at all (72).

The proverbs are a commentary both on Kĩgũũnda's behaviour and the political system as a whole.

The word "here" is reiterated to underline the fact that it is the country's wealth that the foreign industries utilize:

> Where did they get the land on which to build?
>
> Here!
>
> Where did they get the charcoal for use by the machine?
>
> Here!
>
> Where do they get animal skins?
>
> Here!
>
> Where do they get the workers to work those machines?
>
> Here!

Similarly, the words "good" and "imperialists" are repeated to emphasized their various points. For example, the two authors propose that if all the wealth remained in the country we would have:

> Good public schools
>
> Good houses for the workers
>
> Good houses for peasants.
>
> (emphasis added).

The word "imperialist" is likewise repeated to emphasize the similarity between the imperial powers that feed on our wealth:

> Imperialists from Europe
>
> Imperialists from America
>
> Imperialists from Japan (27), (emphasis added).

Certain songs are also repeated several times to emphasize the theme of the play. The most significant is the song sung by a drunk at the beginning of the play and which Kĩgũũnda recapitulates at the end of the play, when he himself has become an alcoholic:

> I shall marry when I want
>
> While all padres are still alive
>
> And I shall get married when I want
>
> While all nuns are still alive (4, 108).

The title of the play is taken from this song and Kĩgũũnda's daughter also quotes the song to support her refusal to get married.

The repetitive structure, in addition, heightens its orality and demonstrates the fact that Ngaahika Ndeenda was targeted for peasants and workers, some of whom were barely literate. The "looseness of structure", with which Cook and Okenimkpe charge the play, was a deliberate device the two Ngũgĩs utilized to allow easy oral presentation. In Ngaahika Ndeenda, the authors were undoubtedly guided by the canons of the traditional African theatre, in which song, dance and mime are an integral part of performance. The play's structure does not need any apologies such as made by Cook and Okenimkpe in their statement:

> This is not to say that art is a superfluous luxury in a village context. Far from it. Anyone connected with varied types of performance in Africa will know that a critical and truly appreciative audience is at least as readily to be found in the village as in any national theatre (174).

The disclaimer bears the misconception that what goes on in a national theatre is more artistic than what is performed in a village. The second misconception Cook and Okenimkpe seem to have is that the play was being written or should have been written in accordance to Western criteria. The deviations from this standard are therefore seen as faults. Commenting on the tendency to default African literary works because they do not adhere to European literary canons, Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, and Madubuike, clearly point out that African literature does not need to be evaluated by Western criteria, because:

> African realities are sufficiently different, or our concern to liberate

> our culture from European imperialism sufficiently antithetical to Europe's imperialist purposes, to demand of us new forms, new genres and critical criteria radically different from European (98).

Their statement aptly describes the reality of Ngaahika Ndeenda, because it was composed in Gĩkũyũ language, collectively by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, and the Gĩkũyũ peasants and workers, and targeted mainly for the Gĩkũyũ audience. In addition, its content depicts the "history of heroic struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism" (Decolonising 45). More importantly, by its extensive utilization of song, dance, mime and proverbs it is closer to traditional theatre than the Western drama. Like a traditional dramatic performance it ends with a song, expressing the people's hope for a better future:

> The trumpet of the masses has blown.
> Let's preach to all our friends
> The trumpet of the masses has blown
> We change to new songs
> For the revolution is new (115).

Furthermore, unlike the early plays, Ngaahika Ndeenda, like Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross, presents the problems facing the peasants and workers in Kenya and suggests ways of solving them. Ngũgĩ's message is loud and clear, the peasants and workers of Kenya are tired of being exploited, as indicated by the final song:

> The trumpet of the masses has been blown.

> We are tired of being robbed
> We are tired of exploitation.
> We are tired of land grabbing
> We are tired of slavery
> We are tired of charity and abuses (116).

Ngaahika Ndeenda is, therefore, not only popular theatre but revolutionary. It incorporates folkloric elements because they are an integral part of the life of the people. Ngũgĩ indicates that:

> Kamĩrĩĩthũ was not an aberration, but an attempt at reconnection with the broken roots of African civilization and its traditions of theatre it was an answer to the question of the real substance of a national theatre (42).

In this regard, we could conclude that like Ngũgĩ's novels, his plays, especially Ngaahika Ndeenda, confirms our thesis that Ngũgĩ utilizes folklore in his literary works for the purposes of fighting against colonialism and neo-colonialism and re-establishing the equilibrium of African cultural values. By incorporating the folkloric elements in his works Ngũgĩ portrayed authentic African worlds and experiences, expressed through an authentic African idiom, thereby, delineating a distinctive "mode of thought and feeling". In the process he has managed to forge a new spiritual coherence out of the historical disconnection between [his] African heritage and [his] modern experience" (Irele 10). The use of folklore in Ngũgĩ's works is, therefore, not a return to exoticism, but a dynamic recreation of Africa's cultural heritage. Ngũgĩ has made a great stride towards fulfilling P'Bitek's call for Africa's cultural revolution.

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CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

> When Europe came to Africa and said, "You have no culture, no civilization, no history" Africa was bound sooner or later to reply by displaying her own accomplishments.
>
> Achebe.

The essence of Achebe's statement aptly summarizes the thrust of our thesis that, the use of folklore in the works of Camara Laye and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was a means through which they, like other African writers, responded to Europe's disparagement of Africa's civilization and cultures. The objective of this study was to analyze the utilization of folklore in Ngũgĩ's and Laye's works in order to dispel some of the misconceptions about African culture by foregrounding the purpose for which the folkloric elements are employed. Purpose, rather than process, was highlighted because both Ngũgĩ and Laye are "far more preoccupied with visionary projection of society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature" (Soyinka 64). In this regard, Ricoeur's theory of interpretation which looks at language as discourse was illuminating. Discourse, according to Ricoeur, projects a world, and, for that reason, Laye's and Ngũgĩ's literary works project an African world through the folkloric elements incorporated in them. The folkloric elements also portray the dignity, profundity, and the glory of our traditional culture and civilization. In addition, the study was interpreted from an Afrocentric point of view which meant that the African perspective of the folkloric elements was emphasized. The Afrocentric perspective helped us to re-evaluate Laye's works and retrieve them from "a heap of footnotes" to which they had been relegated.

Asked why he incorporated so many folkloric elements in L'Enfant noir, Laye stated that he wanted to demonstrate the beauty of African culture, and to testify to its greatness with the objective of making the "people who had not been aware that Africa had its own culture, to grasp our past and our civilization" (Laye 20-22). Similarly, Ngũgĩ declares that he utilizes folkloric elements in his literary works in order to restore the African character to his history and as a means of enhancing the anti-colonial struggle. For instance, Ngũgĩ employs the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin to justify the struggle for land.

In the context of this dissertation, folklore was defined in its broadest terms to include the oral traditions of a people as they appear in their customs, beliefs, magic, and rituals, in addition to myths, legends, tales, popular stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, and anecdotes found among a homogenous group of a people (Nnolim 35). This is why the circumcision rituals, the burial customs, and the rice harvesting rituals are also identified as folkloric elements. In any case, the Western folklorists are still arguing among themselves as to what constitutes folklore, as evidenced by Bascom's article, "Folklore and the Africanist". However, from an Afrocentric point of view art is still viewed as an integral part of life.

Like folklore, African literature is functional, and the folkloric elements within it help to reinforce its social purpose. By utilizing folklore in their works to portray African culture positively, both Ngũgĩ and Laye corrected the common misconceptions about African culture that were perpetrated by colonialism. Through the positive portrayal of traditional life in L'Enfant noir, Laye defended the African tribal societies from the frequent attacks by Europeans, like Hegel, who thought of them as savages, sexually permissive, and lacking cultural and moral values. Similarly, in Le Regard du roi, Laye also corrects some of the misconceptions about African drumming and dancing that had been perpetrated by Western anthropological studies. He also portrays in the same work the magnanimity of African culture through the symbol of the King. Likewise, Ngũgĩ vindicates Gĩkũyũ clitoridectomy by representing it sympathetically in The River Between. In Weep Not Child and A Grain of Wheat he justifies the Mau Mau struggle for land and independence.

Both Ngũgĩ and Laye believe that the African continent can only be rehabilitated through the utilization of the African cultural values that are embedded in folklore. Laye underscores the importance of collecting and preserving African folklore "car celles-ci constituent les fondement mêmes de notre histoire, et ..., de nos civilisations traditionelles particulières" (Le Maître 13). He also highlights the significance of disseminating the true version of our oral tradition, by writing them down in both the European and African languages. In addition, he reasserts the objectives of the Negritude movement to rediscover and rehabilitate the traditional African values and to reject the notions of European cultural superiority. Similarly, Ngũgĩ urges the African intellectuals to return to their roots, to the languages and rhythms of speech of their mother tongues if they hope to portray in their writings the epic grandeur of our history. In urging us to return to our cultural values, Ngũgĩ and Laye do not propose an abandonment of modernization, but a reformulation of the modernization process from our own perspective. In this regard, there is no difference between Laye and Ngũgĩ for they both castigate colonialism and neo-colonialism regardless of their Francophone and Anglophone colonial legacies. Ngũgĩ's latest proclamation to return to our African roots sounds very much like the Negritude call of the thirties and forties, for as Soyinka puts it, Negritude was

> a literary ideology that provided, both for Africans on the continent and for the black societies of the diaspora, a life-line along which the disassociated individuals could be pulled back to the source of his matriarchal essence" (64).

This point needs to be emphasized, because most critics of Francophone and Anglophone literatures have placed a great divide between them, using the different colonial experiences to support their arguments. Our contention is that the colonial regimes in Africa were basically the same. They aimed at creating a small African élite in their own image, but having done so, they kept them at a safe distance. Consequently, the élite began seeking a place to call their own and therefore, they invoked through their literature an African past through which they could feel at home.

Progressively, Ngũgĩ and Laye employed more and more folkloric elements in their literary works. Laye not only utilized folklore in his later works, but actually transcribed an oral epic from the traditional Malinké griot, Babu Condé, a true professor of African folklore and culture. Ngũgĩ, too, returned to his village Kamĩrĩĩthũ and by the help of the people composed his first Gĩkũyũ play in which he incorporated numerous folkloric elements. By writing in Gĩkũyũ, Ngũgĩ ended the debate [as far as he was concerned] that began in Makerere concerning what language African writers should utilize for their creative works. One hopes that more African writers will follow in Ngũgĩ's footsteps and produce authentic African literature in their own languages. As this study has demonstrated, African literature becomes more accessible to its African audience when written in African languages. Furthermore, the written medium poses no problem once the language and content is right. The reception of Devil on the Cross supports this proposition. At the same time, the folkloric elements are easily interwoven into the texts because the problem of transposition is eliminated.

As far as Gĩkũyũ and Malinké folklore is concerned, there are more similarities than differences between them, in terms of certain genres and contexts in which they are performed. This study has shown that the Malinké like the Gĩkũyũ celebrate similar rites of passage. The Malinké circumcision ritual described in L'Enfant noir is similar to the Gĩkũyũ initiation ceremony portrayed in The River Between. In both cultures the initiation ceremony is celebrated amidst singing and dancing. In L'Enfant noir, the rice harvesters have a reverent attitude to the soil that is similar to Ngotho's in Weep Not Child. Similarly, the collective spirit of the Malinké is also found among the Agĩkũyũ, as illustrated by Kenyatta in Facing Mount Kenya. In Weep Not Child, Ngotho waits for the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro to be realized, and, likewise, in Le Regard du roi, Clarence waits for Dioki's prophecy to be fulfilled. Clarence's journey to the South, in search of salvation, is comparable to the journey that people of Ilmorog undertook to the City in Petals of Blood in search of physical and spiritual salvation. While Laye transcribed an oral epic in Le Maître de la parole, Ngũgĩ, in an epic novel, Petals of Blood, represented Kenyan history of struggle as well as that of the rest of Africa history and demonstrates how folklore was the spiritual force that kept the struggle going.

Although Laye does not utilize Biblical elements as extensively as Ngũgĩ does, our study revealed a number of Biblical allusions in some of Laye's works, especially the reference to the King of Kings in Le Regard du roi. In the case of Ngũgĩ's works, Biblical elements are in abundance. There are direct quotations from, and allusions to the Bible, throughout Ngũgĩ's literary works and that is why Nazareth designates Ngũgĩ as the most Christian of the African writers. In Devil on the Cross, for instance, the Bible is not only quoted directly, but its parable is parodied and the symbol of the cross inverted to convey a political message. In fact, Devil on the Cross opens with a proclamation by a "prophet of justice" and, in so doing, demands to be treated as a prophetic utterance, along with all its implications. In this novel, Ngũgĩ, in the guise of an oral artist, utilizes the folkloric elements to pass judgement, cajole, ridicule, warn, advise, indict and generally speak for social justice. The concept of the African writer as a modern griot is finally and fully illustrated by this novel. Unlike Ngũgĩ, Laye never uses the Koran for satirical purposes.

Our investigation of Laye and Ngũgĩ's literary works has further revealed that full interpretation of these works can be achieved only by giving serious consideration to their use of folklore. Failure to consider folklore in African literature in general leads to the misinterpretation of the works. Most scholars of African literature usually emphasize the differences between Anglophone and Francophone writers, citing as a reason for these differences the contrasting methods of colonial administration that the British and the French utilized. The French colonial policy supposedly alienated the Francophone writers from their culture more so than the British policy of indirect rule alienated the Anglophone writers from theirs. When we examine the alienation of highly educated Africans in both systems, however, we discover that their alienation is basically the same.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o illustrates this process of alienation quite clearly in his writings and, from what he says, there is no evidence to show that the British indirect rule helped to ground the Anglophone African writers in their traditions. In fact, in the case of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and his Gĩkũyũ community the alienation took a more extreme form; the Agĩkũyũ were alienated from their land, the very symbol of their existence. There is, therefore, more similarities than dissimilarities between Ngũgĩ and Laye in the way they handle their subject matter and language in their literary texts. In L'Enfant noir and The River Between, for instance, the initiation ceremonies of the Malinké and Agĩkũyũ are described by

Laye and Ngũgĩ, respectively. They both portray a desire to synthesize the African and European values as demonstrated by The River Between and Le Regard du roi.

Folklore is also used to correct some of the misconceptions that had been perpetuated by Western scholarship. The presence of folkloric elements in the works of Ngũgĩ and Laye challenges the long held erroneous idea that traditional Africa is "vanishing". With ninety per cent of Africa's population living in the rural areas, without literacy, traditional Africa cannot be said to be vanishing. Other false notions are also repudiated in Laye's novels. For instance, the misconceived idea of African drumming being a simple occupation that even Clarence could perform without any training is quickly corrected, for he is informed that drumming is "a highly complex art, which involves careful selection, training and hierarchies, ... it delves into the essence of things from which alone the apparent, the concrete can take meaning" (Soyinka 123).

Camara Laye, like Ngũgĩ, has demonstrated that, despite French assimilation policy, the Malinké culture was preserved by the griots. The present situation in Africa is mostly different from that of Western culture. The traditional culture in Africa exists in a symbiotic relationship with the modern culture in a manner that has probably never been experienced anywhere else in the world and questioning whether African authors have been exposed to folklore is, for that reason, superfluous. In the case of Ngũgĩ and Laye their exposure to folklore is indisputable. Moreover, in such a fluid situation, the demarcation between the authentic folklore and "fakelore", to borrow Dorson's term, becomes problematic, apart from those instances in which songs are recorded on commercial discs, some of which Ngũgĩ incorporates in Petals of Blood.

There is a difference, however, in regard to the religious backgrounds of Ngũgĩ and Laye. Ngũgĩ was brought up as a Christian under the British colonial rule, and throughout his work he castigates the kind of Christianity that was brought to Kenya and utilized by the colonialists as a tool for subjugating the Africans. There were cases when the masses appropriated Christianity and formed their own independent churches, as witnessed by the "Church of Sorrows" described in Ngaahika Ndeenda. Even these independent churches are finally renounced by Ngũgĩ, for they follow the same pattern as the Orthodox Christian churches utilizing religion as a means of exploiting the masses. According to Ngũgĩ, the masses do not need religion: they need basic food, clothing, and shelter. Unlike Ngũgĩ, Laye does not openly castigate Islam. He accepts it as part of the Malinké reality. Islam was slightly more accommodating to the African cultures than Christianity, however, it should still be pointed out that Islam, like Christianity, was an alien religion to Africa. Writers, like Ayi Kwei Armah, have categorically condemned Islam in their works. In Le Maître de la parole, Laye comes close to repudiating Islam for its racism, in the episode of Bilali Ibn Ka Mâma.

The greatest argument raised against didactic literature, in its written form, is that it cannot reach its intended audience, especially in Africa where the majority of the people are illiterate. Ngũgĩ and his colleague, through Ngaahika Ndeenda, recently demonstrated that the barrier between the African audience and its literature can be broken, if the literature is written in the language of the people and transmitted in dramatic form. One could also argue that African people are also being exposed to literacy and hopefully in a few decades half of Africa's population will be literate. In this regard, recording our heritage is vital so that when Africa's future children begin to read, they will find something relevant to read. In the Ngũgĩan hopeful projections, I would say to the future African children "Weep not child", for a time will come when you will be able to read your own literature, understand its call and respond to its challenge.

African intellectuals should heed both Ngũgĩ's and Laye's call and return to their roots if they hope to see a total liberation of the African continent politically, socially and economically. They should conduct systematic research on African culture, revealing the positive elements contained therein which could be used to rehabilitate the continent of Africa. This re-evaluation would then enable Africa to take her rightful place in this so called "global village".

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